Generations of Change
Introduction

Jeannette Prochnow and Caterina Rohde

This issue of *InterDisciplines* is a product of the conference »Generations of Change: Understanding Post-Socialism and Transition Processes from a Generational Perspective«. This conference, held at the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology in November 2010, brought together a group of international scholars; among them anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and historians. Purpose was a shift in the prevailing geopolitical angle and regional focus that has been so popular in the study of post socialism in favour of a generational perspective.

It is almost cliché to reiterate that 1989 marks a break of historical continuity. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the later collapse of the Soviet regime a large part of the ›socialist world‹ disappeared from the map. Social scientists and contemporary historians immediately set out to observe and analyse a phenomenon widely known as the ›transformation process‹ or the ›transition‹, labelling the period of all-embracing changes as ›post-socialism‹. Rapidly, new terms entered the academic and public debate, classifying the former ›Eastern bloc‹ into regional spaces such as ›the Baltics‹, ›Central Eastern Europe‹, ›Southern Eastern Europe‹ or ›Central Asia‹ and referring to the vanishing and emerging states by means of attributive constructions, creating diverse ›Exs‹, ›Posts‹ and ›Formers‹.

During the last decade, the terms ›transition‹ and ›transformation‹ have been increasingly criticised as ideologically biased and analytically indefinite. A transition to what? Are these countries expected to copy ›Western‹ social models? After all, the term transition implies a process of change as opposed to relative stability. But what are the ideal stable

DOI:10.2390/indi-v2-i2-35 ISSN 2191-6721

social, political and economic conditions and who decides when this goal is achieved? How long will ›post‹ last and isn't social change a phenomenon inherent to all societies?

Not least the debate between anthropologist Chris Hann and historian Stephan Merl in this volume shows that there still is a need for more in-depth discussion on how to read post socialist changes as well as on the delineation of the initial moment of transformation. Chris Hann's contribution »Moral disposession« suggests we should consider socialism not merely as an authoritarian political system, but also as »a moral order in the Rousseau-Durkheimian sense« (p. 15). Using the example of rural Hungary he finds that the abrupt implementation of the market economy was a moral dispossession that affected many people and rendered their everyday knowledge obsolete. In his commentary »Moral dispossession of the (already) morally dispossessed« Stefan Merl replies that collectivization in the countryside during socialism »meant moral dispossession as well« (p. 38) and many of the hardships people have felt since the onset of the transformation are the result of socio-economic structures implemented under socialist rule. The dictatorships simply drew a veil of silence over phenomena which became apparent only in the course of system change after 1989. »This is the reason why the people connected the hardships they felt during transformation to ›market capitalism‹« (p. 40). Stephan Merl reminds us of central methodological problems of biographical research. Many people are inclined to reconstruct the past »as they would have liked it to be« (p. 38 & 50). Chris Hann's argument that scientists need to avoid constructing life experiences of interview partners »as *we* would like them to remember« (p. 50) shifts the focus to a different research interest. The anthropologist concentrates on the impact economic orders have on interpretative patterns and horizons of experiences, whereas an historical research endeavour avoids reliance on retrospective accounts. A source of error for one discipline is data for another. At the risk of simplifying or exaggerating the disciplinary differences one might say social scientists are interested in experiences made under certain circumstances, while historians focus on the circumstances that bring about experiences. A generational approach need not abandon

either perspective. The controversy between Chris Hann and Stephan Merl illustrates how theoretical frameworks like economic concepts shape both empirical findings and their interpretation. As much as people are inclined to process their life experiences in view to present day circumstances, scientists' interpretations are informed by theoretical assumptions. Debates like that are therefore indispensable in the process of writing culture and history. What is broadly referred to as the ›transition process‹ evidently has not become ›history‹ yet.

No doubt people's everyday knowledge was challenged by the end of socialism, in some cases more massively than in others – this was, and probably still is, a question of generational belonging. However, for the most part, the concept of transition refers to structural alterations in the economies as well as the political, administrative and juridical regimes of nation states and regions. Researchers of post-socialism have compiled a profound body of knowledge on the specificities of the newly emerged nation states and regional entities (see for example Andorka 1997; Meisselwitz & Segert 1997; Segert 2009). Nevertheless, an approach which goes beyond the redrawn borders within the former socialist space and focuses on generations and age cohorts of those who were affected in one way or another by characteristics common to all former socialist states[1] as well as on the breakdown of socialism can shed new light on mechanisms of social change after 1989.

The intention of the conference was to create a strong emphasis on the »social arrangements of the people« (Hann 2002: 11) who were not merely faced with changing structures, but, due to a reflexive approach towards the world in which they live, also actively fostered transformations. Hence regional divergences or particularities were not our main concern, although they should not be neglected. Instead we wanted to bring to light the social relations between people whose lives were informed in different ways by the socialist order due to age differences.

1 For example: restricted freedom of action and movement, surveillance, command economy, etc.

One decade ago, anthropologist Caroline Humphrey already raised the question of whether the attributes ›post-socialism‹ and ›post-socialist‹ are still appropriate categories for grasping the social circumstances of and ways of life in former socialist countries in Europe and Asia (Humphrey 2002: 26). Yet we cannot expect cultural practices to disappear completely and be replaced by new ones. The notion ›post-socialist‹ will remain relevant as long as patterns of interpretation, ideologies and practices that are rooted in the socialist era serve people as a reference point for the perception and assessment of the present (Hann 2002: 7). As sociologist Piotr Sztompka has stated: »it is a truism that all societies are path-dependent, shaped by their particular history and tradition. Earlier events leave traces and imprints – in material infrastructure, in institutions and in memories« (Sztompka 2007: 22). Similarly, Humphrey argues that the strong impact of the socialist past on people's stances cannot be ignored. According to her, this socialist imprinting will lose its effect only in the course of generational succession (Humphrey 2002: 29). This emphasis on generational dynamics is convincing. Unfortunately Caroline Humphrey does not develop in more detail the idea of specific generational attitudes towards social change by thoroughly pursuing the theoretical implications and empirical premises of a generational approach. There have however been some noticeable exceptions, researchers who apply a generational perspective in order to analyse transitional processes (cf. Ahbe & Gries 2006; Bürgel 2006; Wohlrab-Sahr et al. 2009). These studies show that mechanisms of change and stability can be understood more comprehensively when the analytical framework focuses on tensions between the generations involved and their actors (cf. Burkhart & Wolf 2002: 421).

Crucial to generational studies is an understanding that cohorts must not be equated with generation. Nonetheless, a closer look at cohorts often provides useful pointers towards the formation of cultural/social generations, which have to be reconstructed as regards their means of distinguishing themselves from preceding generations (Wohlrab-Sahr 2002: 216). For instance, Elena Glushko's article in this volume deals with two generations of Slovaks in close succession and their experiences of the

Prague Spring and its aftermath and how in consequence they developed distinctive attitudes towards politics in contemporary Slovakia.

The analytical distinction between generation and cohort was one of the essential achievements of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge as elaborated in his programmatic essay *The problem of generations* (1970 [1928]). Refining the ideas of the art historian Wilhelm Pinder, Mannheim maintained that social change and shifts are enforced by »vital moments« of generational change. In the course of this change, new cultural actors endowed with novel approaches towards accumulated cultural knowledge come into action. Mainly subconscious processes of passing on to the next generation norms and practices which grow into attitudes, emotions and opinions go hand in hand with processes of transformation which imply reflection on transmitted cultural knowledge through the ages (Mannheim 1970 [1928]: 538).

Central to Mannheim's theory is the distinction between the analytical categories of »generation location«, »generation as actuality« and »generation unit«. Generation location is determined by the biological cycle, for example date of birth and death and belonging to one socio-historical space and time. A common generation location means nothing more than co-presence in time within one socio-historical context. This holds the potential to materialize as generation as actuality when social actors participate in shared historical destinies (Mannheim 1970 [1928]: 536). Accordingly, generation as actuality exceeds the mere historical co-presence of individuals (Diepstraten et al. 1999). Yet social ties and a feeling of connectedness can shift or be lost. In contrast, Mannheim conceptualises the generation unit as a far more substantial affinity (Mannheim 1970 [1928]: 525). Generation unit refers to a concrete social group within the same actual generation (Mannheim 1970 [1928]: 548). Generation units are comprehended as the actual manifestations of a generation objectified as a quantitatively limited group (Diepstraten et al. 1999). Its members evolve a common vision of historical events or shifts in the socio-historical structure. This also means that different generation units coexist; each of them interprets experiences in a distinctive way and adopts specific practices in response to socio-historical events. It is these

coherent reactions and interpretive performances that contain binding power (Mannheim 1970 [1928]: 547).

Historians and sociologists have critically revisited the analytical category of ›generation‹. Many authors make clear that even though generation has become a fundamental interpretive category in history and the social sciences, it remains a highly ambiguous concept and is open to criticism (Lepsius 2005: 47). Among other hindrances, generational research has not satisfyingly answered the question whether generation refers to an emic self-description of social actors or an etic ascription by researchers for the sake of periodization. To date, the latter has prevailed, i.e. deductive and ex post application of the concept in order to explain social change and continuity rather than inductive description of how social actors themselves distinguish one generation from another. Furthermore, this deductive, mostly retrospective research programme focuses on the explanation of societal dynamics as a whole (Jureit & Wildt 2005: 22). In the end, the understanding of what a generation is has not managed to overcome its close linkage to age cohorts (Jureit & Wildt 2005: 25). In this respect, the sociologist M. Rainer Lepsius speaks of a focus on »experiences of cohorts« (Lepsius 2005: 50). Kirsten Gerland's article in this volume provides an example where generation is explicitly interpreted as an emic category of self-description. What Mannheim defined as a »generation unit« can probably best be found in her contribution on the »young protest generation« in 1980s Poland during martial law.

Mannheim's conceptual triad (generation location, generation as an actuality and generation unit) proves a rather macrosociological impetus. However, on the micro level of families, social generation and familial generation intersect. Within one family, different generation locations coexist. Likewise, family members may belong to different generations as actuality or even to generation units beyond the family context. They may live in what sociologist Ralf Bohnsack has called »conjunctive spaces of experiences«[2] (2002: 249) – a constellation in which negotia-

2 The concept of a conjunctive space of experience bears a resemblance to Bourdieu's idea of ›habitus‹. Conjunction is comprehended as comple-

tions or even tensions may arise in family life. In order to unfold the potentials of the generational approach, sociologist Martin Kohli has suggested linking familial generations, in which generational dynamics manifest themselves considerably, with economic and political generations (Kohli 1996: 6). Caterina Rohde's article in this volume demonstrates that social generations and familial generations are inextricably linked. She follows the life courses of young Russian women whose decision to migrate is informed by both their generational belonging in post-socialist Russia as well as by their position in the family.

Following the latest interdisciplinary discussion on the state of the art, it became evident during the conference that operationalizing the theoretical concept of generation still remains an obstacle. Even though all papers described generations or rather generational dynamics and ruptures – either in the sense of familial relations or socio-historical generations – a generational perspective could not be unmistakably identified using established methodological tools. As a result, the generational approach remains unspecific, also as regards methodological tools appropriate for the identification of mechanisms of distinguishing current generations from those that precede them. To make a long story short: even if the generational approach appears interesting for the investigation of processes of social change, it does not provide a coherent study programme as it does, for instance in biographical research or historical semantics.

This volume does not claim to offer a solution to the problems outlined above. It presents a selection of papers that were given during the conference. The contributors adopted a generational approach as an alternative perspective on their own case studies, highlighting aspects of generational dynamics. We thank all our guests and contributors for their interesting papers and comments during the discussion. Special thanks go to the keynote speaker Chris Hann, Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale and to the discussants of the opening lecture who also chaired the panels: Tatiana Barchunova, Novosibirsk Uni-

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mentary to distinction in the sense of mostly unquestioned practices marking social belonging (Bohnsack & Schäffer 2002: 249).

versity; Stephan Merl, Bielefeld University and Thomas Schmidt-Lux, Leipzig University. We also thank the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology for making the conference possible, the editors of *InterDisciplines* for accepting this special issue, and last but not least all referees for comments and advice.

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Moral Dispossession

Chris Hann

Introduction: The two Karls[3]

Much has been written about the events of 1989-1991 and the ensuing transformations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Like other researchers, we at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology have tried to tease out continuities as well as assess the impact of ruptures. As socialism receded into the past, the utility of the label ›post-socialist‹ seemed inevitably to diminish, and we abandoned this term in designating the research programme of my department. Young social anthropologists going to the field today find that only older informants can narrate direct recollections of life under socialism. Yet the importance of those *Wende* years, in Germany as elsewhere in the region, seems not to diminish at all. In hindsight, it seems increasingly clear that we are indeed dealing with a caesura and the consequent formation of a social generation whose members will shape social change for decades to come. The generational focus of this interdisciplinary workshop at the

3 This paper is an expanded version of a lecture given at the opening of the workshop »Generations of Change: Understanding Postsocialism and Transition Processes from a Generational Perspective« in Bielefeld, 25-27th November 2010 (revised in summer 2011). I thank all my hosts at the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology, and espe cially the workshop organizers Caterina Rohde and Jeanette Prochnow. Thanks also to Gareth Dale for sharing his notes from the Karl Polanyi Archive (this is where I discovered that Karl Polanyi listed Karl Mannheim as a referee in the 1930s). The paper bears the mark of many team projects at the Max Planck Institute in Halle. I also thank James Carrier, Gerald Creed, Keith Hart, Don Kalb and Mihály Sárkány, all of them recent visitors and active participants in our economic anthropology debates. Special thanks to Stephen Gudeman, my partner in the ongoing »Economy and Ritual« project.

DOI:10.2390/indi-v2-i2-36 ISSN 2191-6721

University of Bielefeld is therefore highly welcome. In this contribution I shall offer a brief, necessarily selective review of some anthropological contributions to what I term ›moral dispossession‹, with particular reference to rural communities. This requires some preliminary discussion of the vexed question of socialism as a moral order. Before clarifying my own position and presenting some empirical cases, let me introduce my themes with reference to two scholars of a common social generation formed in Central Europe roughly a century ago.

A generational approach to the changes set in train in 1989 can hardly avoid an engagement with the theories originally put forward by Karl Mannheim in 1928. I shall not elaborate on those ideas, but instead invite you to recall Mannheim's biography. He was born in 1893 in Budapest, where he grew up as a member of a generation that included Karl Polanyi, not to mention Oskar Jaszi, Georg Lukacs and many others who went on to make their mark on scholarly and political life in different parts of the world in the course of the twentieth century. For reasons that will become obvious, I shall concentrate on the figure of Polanyi, born in 1886.

Let me make it clear that I am not postulating any close affinity between these two Karls; as with the other pairs I shall consider later, I emphasize diversity as well as commonalities within the cohort. I do not know how well they knew each other, though they probably interacted in associations of the ›progressive‹ intelligentsia and at literary salons such as that of Polanyi's mother Cecilia, one of the most celebrated salons of the day. Much later, in London in the 1930s, it seems that the younger Karl served as a referee for his impecunious fellow-immigrant. Their philosophical and political instincts were very different. Mannheim looked with disdain on the scientific positivism attractive to Polanyi and other bourgeois radicals such as Jaszi in the years before the First World War. Like his mentor Lukacs, Mannheim preferred to look to German ›metaphysical idealism‹ for theoretical inspiration, though he was more reluctant than Lukacs to engage in politics. Polanyi was more attracted to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and to Émile Durkheim. While working on his masterpiece *The Great Transformation* he returned repeatedly to what he saw as

the central problem of the modern world, namely how to protect individual freedom in a non-traditional, ›complex society‹. Some years after Mannheim's death in 1947, Polanyi praised the work of his compatriot while at the same time criticizing him for paying insufficient attention to the faith that was essential to bind a community.[4]

Student associations and literary salons hardly suffice as a basis for a ›Generation‹ in the expansive Mannheimian sense. These circles were hardly representative of the Hungarian half of the ›dual monarchy‹ before 1914, in which Jews played a prominent role in scholarship as well as in commerce and industry. The generational unity of these intellectuals became evident only in retrospect, after the bloodshed of the First World War, and more emphatically when the failure of the ›Republic of Councils‹ in 1919 had pushed most survivors into foreign exile. The wartime experiences of the two Karls were completely different: Mannheim continued to attend the salons and to work on his dissertation *Structural Analysis of Epistemology*, while Karl Polanyi experienced trauma on the Russian front. The founder of the sociology of knowledge went on to make his name with a dazzling career in Germany, before relocating to England and a lectureship at the London School of Economics after he was ousted from his chair in Frankfurt in 1933. Polanyi's trajectory westwards had superficial similarities, but the reality was very different. He spent most of the 1920s working as an economic journalist in Vienna, where he obtained intimate knowledge of financial markets and the materiality of the real economy. He supported socialist oppositional activi-

4 Abraham Rotstein had extended conversations with Karl Polanyi between 1956 and 1958. He recalled Polanyi opining »Mannheim's book is v. impressive but he suffers from assumption of a world without faith and belief« (Karl Polanyi Archive, Container 45-13, Notes of Weekend XVIII with Karl Polanyi). Yet we know that Mannheim became very concerned with matters of »faith and belief« after his move to England, interacting with both Karl and Michael Polanyi at Christian socialist meetings. A convergence of the two Karls is evident in their key works of this period: *The Great Transformation* was subtitled *The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, while Mannheim published his own *Diagnosis of Our Time* in 1943, cf. Remmling 1975.

ties; but though his wife Ilona Duczynska was a loyal member of the Communist Party, Karl Polanyi himself did not join. Like Mannheim, he repeatedly distanced himself from Marxism, which he saw as marred by economic determinism. Eventually Polanyi too was obliged to relocate to England, where his path crossed with that of Mannheim in left-wing Christian discussion groups. Polanyi gave lectures for the Workers Educational Association while working intensively on the book that was finally published in 1944 in the United States, *The Great Transformation*. On the basis of this work he at last managed to salvage an academic career in New York in the last decades of his life (Dale 2010).

My premise is that the world view and intellectual commitments of the authors of *Ideology and Utopia* and *The Great Transformation* were decisively shaped by their common experiences as young men in Budapest. The Hungarian capital was probably the fastest growing industrial city in Europe at the time; but it was also the second city of an empire still rife with feudal anachronisms. Polanyi wrote presciently of the dangers of this concatenation in the years before the First World War. His standpoint in *The Great Transformation* was doubtless influenced both by his experiences of Red Vienna in the 1920s and by the effects of the Great Depression on British workers in the 1930s. But I think Gareth Dale is right to suggest that the cataclysm of 1914 was the »great divide« that inspired the ambitious historical panorama of Polanyi's magnum opus. It was the rise of ›market society‹ over the entire course of the nineteenth century, especially in Britain, which was responsible for the tragedies of the first half of the twentieth century. British industrial capitalism had, for the first time in history according to Polanyi, broken with traditional forms of integrating economy and society in favour of an untrammeled reliance on ›the market‹.

There is no space here to elaborate this diagnosis and discuss its many critics. Suffice it to note that that Karl Polanyi is enjoying a new wave of popularity in an era of neoliberalism and on-going financial crisis (Hann & Hart 2009). His economic and sociological analyses seem more topical today than they were in the last decades of his life, when Social Democracy, or Keynesianism or ›embedded liberalism‹ (the exact label is not

important here) seemed to have laid the foundations for a new era of global stability. In this paper I want to emphasize the ›moral‹ inspiration of Polanyi's critique of the market. We know that he was greatly influenced by ›guild socialism‹ during the inter-war decades. His impassioned rhetoric and subtle reflections on ›freedom in a complex society‹ reflect this moral positioning. Polanyi did not actually use the phrase ›moral economy‹, but it is not surprising that many people seem to think he did, long before this term was rendered popular through the writings of E. P. Thompson, James Scott and others.

Polanyi's relationship to Karl Marx, Marxism and ›actually existing socialisms‹ was complex – not always edifying, but too complex to probe further here. My purpose is to consider postsocialist transformations after 1989 in the light of Polanyi's analysis of the dramatic impact of the utopia of the self-regulating market in the previous century. In both cases, or so it would seem at first glance, an established moral economy is torn asunder. Many aspects of the most recent destruction have been documented in ethnographic case studies over the last two decades. Before turning to some examples, I would like to introduce the synthesizing concept of moral dispossession and to explain what I consider distinctive about socialism as a moral order in the Rousseau-Durkheimian sense.

Moral dispossession

Let me start with the concept of dispossession, which usually has brute material referents, notably in Marxist analysis of the first stages of industrial capitalism. In the archetypal analysis, peasants are dispossessed of their means of subsistence through enclosures. In the twentieth century it can be argued that the socialist collectivization of agriculture was a comparable appropriation. In both cases, millions of smallholders are effectively compelled to swell the ranks of the urban proletariat. By extension (contrary to the expectations of Marx), if those industrial workers in turn acquire significant resources and entitlements, they too can be dispossessed, notably of their jobs and of any semblance of security in their lives. David Harvey's (2003) analyses of »accumulation through

dispossession« have explored this phenomenon in neoliberal political economies. In today's globalized capitalism, these tendencies can also be found in many former socialist countries, wherever the winds of market competition are allowed to blow. Don Kalb, for example, has written of the effects of the dispossession of the Polish working class by the post-socialist state. As a result, the generation which was mobilized in the Solidarity movement to campaign against an unpopular communist government is nowadays more readily mobilized by right-wing populists. In Kalb's example, dispossession has a very concrete focus when the state moves to eliminate management and ownership by skilled and semi-skilled workers; but this anthropologist extends the notion to include a more diffuse »process of cultural dispossession that accompanied, deepened, and smoothed the material process of dispossession simultaneously taking place« (Kalb 2009: 214).

Working independently along similar lines, Gerald Creed has elaborated a concept of cultural dispossession for the case of rural Bulgaria, where the liquidation of cooperative farms was highly politicized in the 1990s (Creed 1997; 2011). He argues that the overall effect of postsocialist transformation in the Bulgarian countryside has been »a radical restructuring of village social relations in both practice and meaning«. Creed continues as follows:

> I am not speaking simply of people losing some relationships and having to develop new ones, rather I'm suggesting that the very nature of various relations was transformed. Relations between genders, between ethnic groups, and between fellow villagers were all redefined. Different understandings of these relations were characteristic of socialism; some of these were problematic for the transition and others completely disconnected. There was no design for these changes, as the differences were hardly appreciated or recognized by those drawing the transition blueprints (Creed 2011: 10).

In Creed's account, the breaking up of socialist farms exemplifies the more general obliteration of complex forms of living in society. All were abruptly required to conform to a new Western template, so that the

country would qualify for full membership in the European Union. Creed's new book sheds fascinating light on how villagers reacted to this cultural dispossession. He focuses on *kukeri*, traditional mumming performances which were promoted in the socialist era and have retained their popularity in recent years. Through ironic forms of ›ritual re-enchantment‹ actors cope with and comment critically on the reversal of the socialist ideologies of progress with which they were brought up.

From the ›cultural dispossession‹ of Don Kalb and Gerald Creed, it is just a short step to my own coinage. What do I mean by ›moral‹? Unfortunately the usage of this term by philosophers and social scientists is far from consistent, not to mention the diverse understandings of wider publics. Morality refers to questions of right and wrong, including the ethical judgments of individuals in their everyday lives. Much of the recent literature in the ›anthropology of morality‹ is concerned with the individual's freedom to make such judgments, and thus with the crafting of a particular form of ›person‹. But at another level, that of the Durkheimian sociological tradition – which can be traced back to Rousseau – every society is a moral order. By definition, the dramatic collapse of Soviet socialism meant the end of a moral order in this sense, comprising both the termination of practical ways of life and the sudden calling into question of a *Weltanschauung*, of most people's taken-for-granted knowledge of the world in which they lived. The certainties and calculable risks of the late socialist environment were replaced by massive uncertainty and incalculability.

The new mechanisms of the market, which people associated with greater uncertainty, were predicated on the »calculative reason« of short-term individual advantage (Gudeman 2008). However, as Gudeman shows in his most recent work, market society must itself be considered as a moral order, albeit a very different morality from that of socialism (Gudeman forthcoming). The capitalist market is in principle open-ended, universalist and inclusionary. Its moral underpinnings are complex, in both the expansive Durkheimian sense and in the narrower usage that ties morality to ethics and the crafting of the person. Adam Smith is still regularly invoked by the ideologists of neoliberalism as the founding father

who held that the ›invisible hand‹ of the market would suffice to ensure that each individual's pursuit of self-interest was conducive to the good of society. In fact, Smith was by no means unsympathetic to regulation when the interests of an economic sector or an entire country warranted such intervention. Long before he wrote *The Wealth of Nations* [1776] he had shown in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759] that human behaviour was predicated on ›sympathy‹ and fellow-feeling with others, rather than on egoistic utility maximization. In this he was very close to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* he reviewed in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1756. Although Smith's book review was also critical, he and Rousseau belonged to the same Enlightenment generation. They addressed the same basic dilemma of how to legitimise Europe's emerging ›commercial society‹ and were equally unconvinced by Mandeville's portrayal of human nature in *The Fable of the Bees*. Of course their positions differed, as did those of Mannheim and Polanyi. While Rousseau doubted that the advance of civilization could be reconciled with virtuous communities, Smith eventually endorsed commercial society. He did so on moral grounds, because in his view the expansion of exchange through the division of labour was conducive to diligence and social stability via interpersonal emulation, and not because he considered selfish accumulation to be a value in itself; still less should it be viewed as the ultimate determinant of human action (Force 2003).

If Polanyi was inclined to dismiss ›disembedded‹ market society as being devoid of moral foundation, the encompassing socialist moral order has been similarly misrecognized by its critics. The problems of these moral orders were often self-made: we must remember the polarized climate of the Cold War era, in which Western representations of the Iron Curtain emphasized lawlessness, the arbitrariness of power holders, the absence not only of secure property rights but of fundamental freedoms. Such images are maintained in history books, in countless museums and exhibitions and in commemorations of appropriate anniversaries. Nowhere are these memories cultivated more vigorously than in Germany. If at the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the erection of the Berlin Wall, the members of a contemporary left-wing political party refuse to

join in a ceremony to mark the ensuing loss of life, it gives rise to a scandal because the moral issue seems so unambiguous.

Yet the socialist power holders who eventually authorized the construction of that wall also invoked moral principles, namely building a more just, more egalitarian society. The extent to which they succeeded in doing so is not the issue here. What matters is that, precisely because they lacked the legitimacy conferred by multi-party competition at the ballot box, socialist regimes were compelled to maintain a vigorous moral rhetoric to justify their exercise of power. They could make certain compromises, notably by relaxing economic controls and giving more scope to market forces in order to increase consumer satisfaction – a critical source of complicity if not of ethical legitimacy. But this strategy was risky, because ›market socialism‹ led to hodge-podge mixtures which inevitably cut into the moral foundations without ever being able to match fully capitalist markets in terms of economic efficiency. Hungary, the homeland of the two Karls, is the best illustration: the success of ›goulash communism‹ after the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968 did not prevent the great majority of Hungarians from voting the socialist party out of power as soon as they had an opportunity to do so, in 1990. On the other hand, the fact that this party, in spite of the disasters of Stalinism and 1956, survived and was actually voted back into power in 1994, 2002 and 2006 suggests that, at least in this country, the pursuit of certain socialist ideals in a moderate, pragmatic spirit was attractive to many.

Let us not forget that socialism was opposed on moral grounds by countless opposition activists, from isolated dissidents who in the end opted for ›internal emigration‹ to Soviet scientists with the courage of Andrei Sakharov, GDR *Bürgerrechtler* and a Polish electrician called Lech Wałęsa whose rhetorical skills far exceeded those of any intellectual. But the Solidarity movement proved to be ephemeral. Even in 1980 I noticed that it did not have much respect among Polish farmers, and it had broken up into competing factions well before the changes of 1989, in part because of its inability to retain the ›moral high ground‹. What is striking to me after two decades of ›postsocialism‹ is the abundant evi-

dence that vast numbers of ordinary people, citizens usually perceived in Western countries as the victims of socialist power, consider the *ancien régime* to have been more just (ethically defensible) than any of the successor regimes. Who would have expected this twenty years ago?

Of course such statements, as with all memories of the socialist past, reflect the respondents' present-day situation: their disillusionment with corruption, and the hardship they experience, or notice others experiencing. Even without expert analyses of rising Gini coefficients, most people in most postsocialist countries seem to feel that differentials have greatly widened, and that this is a bad thing. Moreover they feel – and have good grounds for feeling – that the new inequalities are less transparent than those of the old *nomenklatura*. I used to know people in 1970s Hungary who, in spite of the regime's origins in the violence which eventually brought János Kádár to power in 1956, still *believed* in socialism. A few (including Kádár himself) attempted to act out its moral principles in an almost Weberian spirit of *innerweltliche Askese*, defying the consumerist trends of the last decades of socialist power. They were a minority, for sure. But the larger number of citizens who showed no strong signs of internal moral conviction could still be held to account by the prevailing socialist moral norms, even when these were often held up as the object of irony, cynicism and even scorn. By contrast, there seems to be widespread agreement that the ›market society‹ which dominates today, and which has in recent years engulfed the socialist party itself, does not even pretend to have a moral foundation. In the popular perception, shaped by the continuing uncertainties of world financial markets as well as the discourses of socialism and many much older currents, the market stands only for short-term profit-making; the antithesis of morality. We could call this grassroots Polanyi-ism, though the anti-market sentiment can be traced back at least as far as Aristotle.

Bringing capitalism to the socialist countryside

Let me now turn to illustrate this »moral dispossession« with reference to our projects at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.[5] Western anthropologists have worked more in the countryside than in industrial settings such as that considered by Don Kalb. As Creed and others have shown, the policies characterized as decollectivization or privatization turn out to have been more or less devastating processes of dispossession, arguably more destructive than the original interventions to collectivize, and comparable in their effects to the enclosure movement of preindustrial Britain (Hann et al. 2003). The great advantage of investigating these processes in a face-to-face community is that one can study the full complexity of the changes in a manageable setting in a way that is impossible in the city. Kalb solves the problem by focusing creatively on a single individual, but the village researcher is ideally able to trace and follow through tangled networks. She can combine sources of information to produce a satisfying holistic account, without neglecting intra-community differentiation, including diverging moral evaluations. Another justification for studying the countryside is the simple fact that, in addition to maintaining a larger farm labour force than found in capitalist countries, due to under-urbanisation many factory workers under socialism were constrained to live in villages and commute to their workplaces.

Collectivization had resulted most commonly in some form of ›producers' cooperative‹ based on the Soviet *kolkhoz*. This institution exemplified socialism in the rural sphere, although ideologically state farms were considered to be a higher form of ownership. From their inception, the new socialist forms were central to the local moral order, albeit often exposed to strong moral critique. The spectrum of decollectivization ranges from the rather benign methods used to integrate the LPGs (*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften*, agricultural production coop-

5 For more details of the projects of this Focus Group see the final report »Property Relations«: www.eth.mpg.de/cms/en/publications/reports/pdf/Depart_II_2005_Property_Relations.pdf.

eratives) of the *neue Bundesländer* into the institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Union (Buechler & Buechler 2002) to the brutal methods used by postsocialist *fermery* and their urban patrons in Uzbekistan to set up their own private farms at the expense of the mass of former *kolkhoz* members (Trevisani 2010). In most parts of the former Soviet Union, the distribution of individualized shares did not enable any effective empowerment. Many did not even bother to ascertain where their share might be, since they had no realistic prospect of farming it as a household enterprise (cf. Yalçın-Heckmann 2010). The ›terms of trade‹ between town and countryside have, from the point of view of the latter, generally deteriorated; within the countryside, inequalities of income and ownership have greatly increased. Very large numbers of villagers lost their jobs and have been forced to migrate and/or to eke out a living through subsistence farming on the household plot, which has become their major asset.

Beyond national and regional differences, closer inspection reveals considerable variation, even within individual communities. In this respect the Hungarian village of Tázlár, which I have studied since the mid-1970s, is no exception. Indeed, social inequalities here were unusually marked due to the settlement history. This region of the Great Plain was repopulated from the late nineteenth century onwards by migrants with very different endowments, though all had been affected by population expansion and economic pressures in their native communities (Hann 1980; Juhász 1997). Socialism brought new dimensions of inequality, without ever entirely eliminating the older ones. I selected this region between the rivers Danube and Tisza because of the prevalence here of a loose form of cooperative, which had attracted my attention in the academic literature. The essence of this cooperative, in comparison with the standard *kolkhoz*, was the unusually wide scope it gave for the persistence of family farming on one's own plots, including viticulture. Most villagers in the 1970s spent little or no time working for the collective sector of the cooperative; but their membership entitled them to draw on its assistance in obtaining inputs and in marketing their products. This large measure of continuity with the peasant past helped to explain the

strength of the Independent Smallholders' Party after 1989 and the distinct lack of sympathy for collectivist ideals, even though Tázlár villagers had profited greatly in material terms from their flexible form of cooperative and the market-oriented policies pursued by the socialist regime after 1968.

The postsocialist years brought new inequalities, which again evolved in complex ways on the basis of past differentiation. Of course, many of the people I knew well in the 1970s and 1980s are long deceased. My longest stay in the postsocialist era was a sojourn of two months in 2001, but this was insufficient for a comprehensive restudy (Hann 2006). The friendships I maintain tend to be with people of my own age or a little older who helped me in one way or another during the original fieldwork. I do not know the ›generation‹ of the *rendszerváltás* (*Wende*, ›system change‹), except indirectly through their parents. Even if I had more adequate data, there is no space in this paper to attempt a more global assessment. On the other hand to focus on a single individual, as does Kalb, would be to obliterate the variation. I therefore wish to share some impressions gleaned during my most recent visit to Tázlár (September 2008) by focusing on two individuals who represent two poles of the generation of market socialism.

It was thanks to Sanyi that I selected Tázlár as my field site in the first place. In May 1976, I was walking around the district for the first time and he picked me up in his Trabant in the late afternoon of my first visit to this settlement. He was the ideal person to help me to understand the tensions of this unusual form of cooperative, and to mediate my residence and research in the village. Sanyi worked as an agronomist, employed by the cooperative to facilitate the independent household farming of its members; he was not involved at all with its (rather limited) collective activities. However, he had not grown up on a farm, but in small towns where his father was a watchmaker. Sanyi was a member of the Communist Party, having joined not for careerist reasons but because he was a *believer* in socialist ideals, in the sense noted in the previous section. This may well have played a role in obtaining the necessary political authorization for my project at a higher lever (the chairman of

the local council made it plain that he did not wish to have a young foreigner in the village, but acquiesced in the face of my letters of recommendation from the Academy of Sciences in Budapest and the support of the cooperative leadership, which Sanyi arranged for me in his usual bluff, straightforward fashion).

Sanyi was my principal companion during my ten months in the village. His own role changed in the last decade of socialism: he became the first full-time secretary of the local cell of the Communist Party, thereby giving up his role as an adviser to smallholder producers. However he remained a member of the cooperative and helped to ensure that it continued to pursue flexible policies that would benefit its members. He played the leading role in managing a small ›auxiliary economic unit‹ devoted to the manufacture of shoe uppers, an initiative that helped to create jobs (mainly for women) and to keep the cooperative financially healthy during the last years of socialism. Meanwhile, like almost everyone else in Hungary, he worked on his own plots in his spare time (it was thanks to this additional income – mainly from vineyards – that he was able to modernize his house in the market centre, and to purchase his Trabant).

The end of socialism was a catastrophe for Sanyi. It coincided with the breakup of his first marriage, which obliged him to give up his urban home and private vineyards. By the time he remarried he had lost his job and main source of income. He was not the only cooperative leader to suffer in this way, but Sanyi's case was much more serious because, having transferred virtually all his assets to his ex-wife, he needed to accumulate afresh. For some years he and his new wife had to endure atrocious unhygienic conditions while living at the cooperative's central hog facility. Eventually, with the health of his infant children as justification, the postsocialist council helped him to construct a new house. He was never able to finish the building properly. In 2008, his house and yard still stood out for their untidiness and obvious signs of poverty. Some villagers would comment on this as evidence of moral failure, and project a mysterious connection between the breakdown of his first marriage and his loyalty to the Communist Party. But my impression over

the years is that a large majority sympathizes with him as a victim of the transition; villagers respect the fact that he is one of the few former Party members who has not switched allegiance, but remained committed to the party known since 1990 as the Hungarian Socialist Party. His previous record of assistance to small farmers is not forgotten and his continued civil engagement, in particular with pensioner groups, is widely appreciated.

In 2008 Sanyi was almost 65 and about to become an old age pensioner himself. After 1990 the principal source of income in his household had in any case been transfers from the state, mainly in the form of child allowances. To make ends meet he has pursued a range of small-scale farming activities, butchered pigs and undertaken other casual jobs for neighbours. One key element in his retirement strategy was to hold on to the shares he received in the cooperative when it was restructured in the early 1990s. Indeed he and his wife bought up shares disposed of by others as cooperative membership shrank. They were convinced that the real estate held by the institution, including the auxiliary economic units established at the end of the socialist era, would secure their investment. However, and this was the main news Sanyi had to tell me during my 2008 visit, long, drawn-out litigation instigated by the former Chief Agronomist had resulted in a compensation award that effectively nullified the value of his shares. The cooperative was defunct and its last remaining properties would be sold to pay off the major creditor, the state. With this, almost two decades after the collapse of socialism, the material dispossession of those ideologically sympathetic to the cooperative was complete.

Sanyi is clearly a victim; indeed it is hard to imagine a more dramatic case. He has lost much of the ebullience I recall from the socialist era. Occasionally he attaches blame to particular individuals, notably the cooperative chairman who chose not to rehire him as an agronomist when it theoretically would have been possible to do so in 1990. He does not indulge in self-pity and I have never heard him or anyone else in the village use the terms victim or scapegoat; but that is how I see him myself. I admire the fact that he has stuck to his principles. Then as now, he

genuinely believes that socialist ideals are the key to a more just society. However, unlike the children of his first marriage, those of the second (primarily because of the enthusiasm of their mother) go to church regularly and have gone through the standard Catholic life-cycle rituals. He does not need to show up regularly himself in order to hold on to his place in the moral community.

After leaving Sanyi I went to call on Feri, whose luxurious house adjacent to the main road, with its well tended garden and tidy yard, is immediately indicative of the stark contrast between these two men. Feri is some five years younger than Sanyi, but I classify him in the same social generation. At the time of my first fieldwork in 1976 to 1977 he shared a yard with his grandmother, who was my landlady. They were descendants of one of the first families to resettle the *puszta* of Tázlár in the nineteenth century. The family had accumulated substantial acreage, and then lost most of it after being branded *kulák* in the 1950s. My landlady was a staunch anti-communist who attended mass in the Catholic church daily. Feri did no go to church regularly, but he shared her basic political views and had also inherited something of the family's entrepreneurial values. After completing vocational school, he set about applying his skills as a mechanic to profit from the opportunities available in the relaxed climate of the time. It was relatively easy to acquire a private tractor and the additional equipment necessary to provide a full range of farming services, which Feri was able to offer more promptly and efficiently than the tractor drivers of the cooperative with whom he competed. Later he added a combine harvester to his personal machine park. This dynamic success continued after the end of communism when Feri opened the village's first (and only) petrol station and acquired a haulage fleet for long-distance freight transport. When the cooperative began to dispose of its assets, he used his shares and those of his grandmother to buy a bus for a knockdown price, reselling it at once at a substantial profit. In the early 1990s he was the ultimate market entrepreneur, rejoicing in the demise of the cooperative and the definitive privatization of all its farmland.

On the face of it, Feri is a ›winner‹ of the Hungarian *rendszerváltás*, though in his case the very notion of a rupture is problematic. There was perhaps a slight acceleration in the early 1990s, but his capital accumulation had its roots in the market socialism of the 1970s. Feri was a nominal member of the cooperative (like his grandmother), but even in those years when the cooperative required its members to provide labour inputs (the maximum was six days per year), he preferred to pay a small financial penalty instead. He employed others to work for him, mainly as drivers. This was initially part of the ›black‹ economy, since it obviously contradicted the socialist norm, though by the time of my fieldwork it was tolerated. In the 1990s, however, his chief assistant and drivers had been fully legalized: Feri conscientiously paid the employer's prescribed insurance and pension contributions. He never played any significant role in politics or the public sphere in the village, but he certainly had friends and his material success commanded respect. With Sanyi, the former Party Secretary, I recall he had a teasing, joking relationship in the 1970s. Feri, like his grandmother, made no secret of his distaste for socialist bureaucracy. Sanyi countered with banter, nicknaming him *sumák*, a term that implied a moral rebuke for avarice, with implications of cheating.

During my visit in 2008 I could not help but see obvious changes in Feri's lifestyle, compared to the assertive entrepreneur I had known previously. The change had begun in the late 1990s and was closely linked to the sudden loss of his wife through leukaemia in 1999. Since then he has lived alone in his large house and gone to church more often. One daughter lives and works in Budapest. Another, who has married and given him grandchildren, lives in a nearby market town; she visits regularly and assists him with his tax records. Rumour has it that his daughters have been unsympathetic to the idea of a remarriage. In 2008 we did not talk about such intimate matters but about his business interests and the general social and political climate. He complained that the haulage market was saturated, and that for several years it had been an uphill struggle to balance the books. When he ventured more sweeping generalizations about the era of *demokrácia*, comparing it unfavourably to the

late socialist era, I made the obvious riposte. I suggested that he, of course, had rosy memories of the Kádár years because he had been one of the first in the region to exploit new economic niches. Now such opportunities were few and far between, because there was market competition in all sectors; but surely he had to concede that this consolidation of the market was a good thing, even though it made future windfall profits for himself less likely?

No, no, no, he explained. I had misunderstood. In his opinion, the economic society of the late socialist era was still fundamentally humane in a way that the cutthroat competition of today's market society was not. Mistrust was now far more prevalent, the opportunities for village youth had been greatly reduced, and the high incidence of unemployment was tragic. Feri's ethical judgement was emphatically social, articulated in terms of the diminished opportunities open to others. To put it in the terms of Polanyi and Creed, Feri was offering me a narrative of disembedding, in which the very nature of human relations had been transformed. Despite Feri's very different family background, values and politico-economic profile in the community, his views about the socialist era seemed quite similar to those held by Sanyi. Winner and loser alike held Kádár's version of socialism (despite the shabby origins of that regime) to be basically decent, though their own positions in that system had been utterly different. This, I suggest, is evidence of a widespread, collectively held or social memory among Hungarian villagers. I do not claim that such representations were evenly distributed throughout the community. But even some of the most vociferous detractors of socialism, those who were most active in the Independent Smallholders' Party until its ignominious collapse in 2002, who were ideologically opposed to any form of cooperative – even these villagers concede that socialist job security and support policies for agriculture compare favourably with the situation today. Many of these villagers are now active supporters of an extreme right-wing political party (*Jobbik*) that promotes Hungarian nationalism and is fiercely critical of other groups, especially Gypsies.

I am arguing that we need to recognize social transformation. An ›anthropology of morality‹ which places the main emphasis on transformations of the self is poorly equipped to deal with the world-historical significance of the end of the socialist moral order. Of course, remembrances occur in individual heads and they are also affected by countless personal circumstances. I hinted at the significance of domestic misfortune in the cases of both Sanyi and Feri. Their children certainly see some matters quite differently (as noted, Feri's daughters have left the village, while Sanyi's five children from his second wife all remain in Tázlár and have little prospect of geographical or social mobility). But it seems to me that both generations have experienced what I theorized in my introduction to our collective volume (Hann et al. 2003) as the destruction of the socialist moral economy, and what I am now terming moral dispossession. Although the loose form of cooperative in Tázlár was very different from the standard models of socialist agriculture, the end of the old moral order was very much the same as that which our Focus Group documented elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc. These patterns can be compared and contrasted with the reforms of collectivized agriculture in China from the late 1970s. Here the villagers were not dispossessed materially but allocated land in egalitarian plots, which they hold with long-term leases. In China the ›household responsibility‹ system was experienced as a return to the older local moral economy, despite the increasing penetration of the market in recent decades. By contrast, decollectivization in the Soviet bloc has generally been experienced as moral dispossession. The sudden penetration of capitalism has born out Rousseau's critique, rather than the Adam Smith's more optimistic prognosis for commercial society.

Morality, religion, rupture

In the previous section I have argued that the destruction of socialist farming institutions helped to cement grave moral uncertainty, even in locations where collective farms had been vigorously opposed at their introduction and later greatly attenuated in their actual workings. It might be objected that the face-to-face character of the village makes a crucial difference. The big city equivalents of Sanyi and Feri would be

unlikely to run into each other regularly at local events; they would have more economic as well as social opportunities open to them; and so their sense of moral change might be weaker.

Although the village certainly does differ from the conurbation and cannot be considered representative of the whole society (any more than one village can be considered representative of the entire rural sector), I argue that in certain ways the rural setting sheds more concentrated light on processes central to the larger picture. To understand these better, I find it useful to return to Polanyi. His theorizing of a great transformation hinged on the Speenhamland system amending the Poor Law in the late eighteenth century. But was the impact of this legislation any more dramatic than the Black Act at the beginning of the century, which also provoked widespread protest and unrest (Thompson 1975)? It seems to me that, contrary to Polanyi, the processes of both moral and institutional change in English society have been overwhelmingly gradualist – right down to 2011, when a conservative Prime Minister attributes urban riots and looting to the moral shortcomings of a ›broken society‹. There seems to be widespread agreement that the moral order of twenty-first century Britain is that of a brash consumerism, which is to say that its market society is effectively devoid of morality in the narrower, popular sense; and that this consumerism, far from propagating the virtues of honest labour and social stability upheld by Adam Smith, undermines them both.

In comparison, in Eastern Europe collectivization and decollectivization caused both institutional and moral caesurae. The moral rupture was significant because Marxist ideology aspired to create a secular public morality. It did so in a novel way but, especially where this could be grafted on to earlier traditions as seems eventually to have happened in much of the Soviet countryside, upheaval was mitigated. For example, a Party Secretary and an Orthodox priest might disagree on many details, but some form of local solidarity and hard work as the basic source of value were central principles for both. By contrast, the rupture of the early 1990s was more truly dramatic because no plausible public morality at all was on offer. In the West, religious belief and participation in

church activities declined gradually over centuries. In socialist countries these traditional bastions of moral values had been explicitly attacked in the name of ›scientific atheism‹. But even where these policies proved counter-productive, as in Poland, socialism in a sense competed with religion by trying to project itself as a moral order. With the collapse of the regime that, so to speak, wore its morality on its sleeve, something like a vacuum ensued in this domain. This is a dubious metaphor, since human beings can never be entirely devoid of moral ideas. The proponents of shock therapy in the economic domain usually leavened their message with simultaneous proclamation of the virtues of ›civil society‹. But as a source of ultimate values, this was never convincing beyond small circles of urban intellectuals. And this helps us to understand why so many people turned instead to other, contradictory sources, such as the populist nationalism analysed by Don Kalb in Poland, or the folkloric re-enchantment documented by Gerald Creed in Bulgaria.

The failure of the socialist faith led many to look again at other forms of absolute commitment, both traditional and new, which took the sensible precaution of promising salvation not on this earth, but in some other world. In the wake of the investigations of rural property relations described above, between 2006 and 2009 my department at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology organized projects focusing specifically on the links between morality and religion.[6] These too were widely distributed across the landmass of Eurasia, between Eastern Germany and East Asia. The *neue Bundesländer* are one of the most secularized regions of the continent. Sociological data indicate that this has not changed very much in the two decades since the *Wende*. Nevertheless, some of our projects suggested that religion might be playing a more important role in moral education (Birgit Huber), in prisoner rehabilitation (Irene Becci) and even in business life (Esther Peperkamp) than is usually recognized. In European Russia we found more dramatic changes. The Russian Or-

6 See for example Heintz 2009; Tocheva 2011; Zigon 2008; 2011. For more details of the projects of the Focus Group cf. the final report »Religion, Identities, Postsocialism«: www.eth.mpg.de/cms/en/publications/reports/pdf/religion_report_2010.pdf.

thodox Church has offered many former Communists an opportunity to refashion their faith and their organisational skills. For example, in her work in a parish near St. Petersburg, Detelina Tocheva has found that a core group of activists continues to emphasize the moral value of hard work. She describes this in terms of a secular asceticism, because it seems unrelated to soteriological convictions. The influence of church membership, or the practice of rituals and pilgrimage without joining a parish, on the moral behaviour of individuals was generally hard to detect. Much more conspicuous in the results of our Russian projects, but also in the work in Central Asia and South-East Asia, was the tight link between religious affiliation and national identity. Power holders such as Vladimir Putin have instrumentalized churches by in effect (re)nationalizing them. The outcome is that instead of a more effective revival of traditional Christian values, which might include moral criticism of financial *spekulacja* and reveal common ground with socialist discourses, the ultimate sources of collective identity, or the general will or the Durkheimian moral order are now sought in the nation. Analogous to Kalb's analysis of the populism of the Kaczynski brothers in Poland, the values of an increasingly exclusive and intolerant patriotism replace those of socialist brotherhood.

Moral dispossession is perhaps best demonstrated in the conspicuous phenomenon of religious conversion (cf. Pelkmans 2009). Many foreign churches have proselytized successfully in postsocialist countries, in spite of the efforts of most regimes to repress and exclude missionaries. Local Baptists have succeeded in rejuvenating an older congregation in Tázlár, the Hungarian village described in the previous section. The case of the Gypsies, one of the major casualties of postsocialist dispossession in all its dimensions, has been addressed by László Fosztó in Transylvania (2008), where many have converted to Pentecostalism. The popularity of New Age forms of spirituality, especially among younger people, and of neo-Shamanism in much of Central Asia, also owes much to deep moral uncertainties. It would be instructive to subject changing patterns of religious affiliation, including ›conversion‹ to the religion of one's athe-

ist/secularized forefathers, to a rigorous comparative cohort analysis; but to the best of my knowledge this has not yet been undertaken.

Conclusion

In this paper I have taken most of my illustrations from research projects at my own Institute, but there is now a significant body of work that we might characterize as the ›anthropology of postsocialism‹. Some of its most influential representatives have expressed their discomfort with carving out a new sub-field. It would surely be preferable to integrate the study of postsocialist changes into a more general theory of social change, but few socio-cultural anthropologists have come forward with new ideas at this level. The end of Soviet socialism provided us with a great opportunity to raise our game; but the timing was unfortunate in the sense that the *Wende* came at the end of a century in which most anthropologists came to define their discipline in terms of the ethnographic method. Boas, Malinowski and their students had good reason for abandoning simplistic theories of evolution and ›survivals‹, but it is unfortunate that the synchronism of fieldwork has largely occluded a concern with the ›big picture‹ of world history. It is similarly unfortunate that recent trends in the anthropological study of morality, emphasizing work on the self, the crafting of the person, reflect the individualist ideology of the neoliberal era; they impede recognition of the social transformation of the moral order which has occurred in places like Tázlár.

Postsocialist anthropology has been largely characterized by localized case studies. We have numerous accounts of how people have struggled to cope in their ›everyday economies‹, e.g. practising reciprocity in informal networks, or benefiting from the redistribution carried out by faith-based NGO soup-kitchens, or participating in irregular markets and selling one's labour in the transnational ›care‹ sector, to mention just a few of the topics that would certainly have attracted the attention of Karl Polanyi. But we lack scholars with his vision, let alone that of Lewis H. Morgan and Friedrich Engels, to analyze what the end of socialist regimes has meant for the women and men of Eurasia in the *longue durée* of history. The abandoning of ›scientific atheism‹ and the resurgence of

religion in the public sphere of many ex-socialist countries have not been integrated into general theories of secularization and ›multiple modernities‹. It seems to me that anthropologists have failed to build on the nineteenth century foundations of their discipline. They have given up on the truly crucial questions, such as the problems of freedom and responsibility in a complex industrial society as posed by Rousseau and addressed by Karl Polanyi at the end of *The Great Transformation*. Instead, they have allowed the initiative to pass to other fields. Specialists in game theory and experimental economics have comprehensively demolished simplistic models of *homo economicus*. Social anthropologists are now learning from them what should have been clear all along: that human agents are motivated by considerations of equity and judgments of fairness as well as by selfish accumulation. The real-life economies of the postsocialist countries are surely just as instructive a setting to explore these issues as the laboratory of the game theorist.

Karl Mannheim and Karl Polanyi were among the leading members of a social generation which, in very different ways, rejected the utilitarianism of the nineteenth century and set out in search of a new moral vision. Lukacs and many others found a satisfying answer by embracing Marxism and joining the Communist Party. Neither Mannheim nor Polanyi was able to take this step, though each of these Jewish scholars went through a phase in which he took seriously the role of Christianity in providing the moral foundation for Western civilization. The inadequacies of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist socialism in practice were exposed well before 1989. But that effort was not entirely empty and the abruptness of the arrival of the market has proved deeply distasteful to many citizens. In reality, as Polanyi taught in his critique of utopianism, markets are always enabled by specific political and legal institutions, above all by the state. In this sense the economy can never be ›disembedded‹. What Polanyi drew attention to in nineteenth century Britain, and what the literature on much of postsocialist Eurasia in the last two decades confirms, can be summed up as moral disembedding or dispossession.

But Polanyi exaggerated the abruptness of the original great transformation. Western capitalist states have undergone more or less gradualist transition processes since the onset of industrialization, and these continue in the era of neoliberalism. Even if there was in some sense a Speenhamland ›generation‹ (which I doubt), moral justifications (such as the obligation to aid only ›deserving poor‹) have undergone continuous modification rather than radical upheaval. By contrast, the attempts to first impose socialism and then later, within the memory of its first generations, to dismantle it in favour of capitalist markets, have resulted in a kind of cognitive chaos, evident even at the micro-scale in the village community. The dissonance would be vast enough if it were restricted to a simple story of winners and losers. The new unemployed might be expected to bemoan the abandonment of socialist values, while the upwardly mobile might be expected to impugn socialist morality and, if they felt a need for justification, to find it in forms of religion, or in the rhetoric of civil society, or that of the nation. But the reality is far more complex. Losers, too, are attracted to populist nationalism in both town and countryside, while generational effects may hinder social coherence for many decades.

I am convinced that a generational approach can shed valuable light on these dynamics in periods during which social change somehow ›accelerates‹; it can help us to understand why change is so uneven, more ›sticky‹ and less complete in some domains than in others. In an academic world in which the pressures toward specialization often seem overwhelming, interdisciplinary cooperation is the only way to address these big questions; and the biggest question of all is the abiding problem of human society as a moral order.

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Moral dispossession of the (already) morally dispossessed?

A commentary on Chris Hann's contribution

Stephan Merl

There is no doubt that the feeling of being morally dispossessed is widespread among people of the older age cohort living in the countryside of the former socialist states. Many of them yearn for the time under communist rule. Noting such a feeling, however, does not mean that the observation is correct for the understanding of the present situation. Anybody who is used to working with interviews is aware of the extent to which the answers are influenced by ignoring important facts unpleasant for the respondent. People construct their past as they would like it to have been. This is a special problem with people living under a dictatorship surrounded by everyday repression. Unconsciously, in order to live a ›normal life‹, people tend to misrecognize what they do not want to see. We are confronted with these problems when doing field studies in the former socialist countries. Thus we must be very careful when constructing a theoretical and analytical framework for our research. Having worked on the socialist regimes for the last forty years and understanding their real way of functioning, I am aware of the extent of moral dispossession connected with implementing the socialist social order. My comment is from a historical perspective. I will focus on what seems to be necessary to get sufficient contextualisation for the interpretation of the lives of people living in the countryside of the former socialist states. As transition to socialism meant a process of ›moral dispossession‹ as well, I chose as title for my commentary: »Moral dispossession of the (already) morally dispossessed?«

My comparison also starts with the transition process of the nineteenth century. However, in my approach I analyse both cases as a transfer to a market economy from a pre-modern economy, connected with low standards of living and an inefficient organisation of labour. This transition led to a significant improvement of living conditions for the broad masses of the people. However, normally only the younger generation profits from it, while the older generation often perceives transition as dispossession, forgetting about the negative features of the previous social order. Only a purely theoretical approach may describe this process as a fight between ›socialism‹ and ›capitalism‹. In reality under both, ›socialism‹ and ›capitalism‹, there are many attempts to manipulate market mechanisms. This manipulation was brought to perfection in the socialist countries with the implementation of the command economy. It protected monopolist structures against the interests of the consumer, whether people or enterprises, in our case agricultural enterprises. Monopolist structures of production made wasteful use of the production resources, labour and capital. Manipulating the market, however, is a problem in capitalist states as well. The post-communist states are good examples of this. The political-economical elite, formed under socialism, is still influential and co-opting new actors. The harm comes from manipulation of the market by this political framework. We should not start our analysis from a promised utopia like ›communism‹. We have to ask how the system functions in reality. Every social order keeps silent about basic facts of its functioning. Only because nearly everybody broke the official rules was socialism able to function. Informal networks and the use of corruptive practices were widespread. In spite of the official rhetoric, the regimes tolerated breaking of their official rules (Merl 2010). Life under socialism thus was marked by a strong discrepancy between words and real actions.

Hann claims that the causes of today's moral dispossession in the countryside of the former socialist countries arose from the new order. This is not correct. He is speaking of »brutal methods« of decollectivization while collectivization in his eyes was much less destructive (Hann: 21-22). »What is striking to me after two decades of ›postsocialism‹ is the

abundant evidence that vast numbers of ordinary people, citizens usually perceived in Western countries as the victims of socialist power, consider the *ancien régime* to have been more just (ethically defensible) than any of the successor regimes« (Hann: 18-19). The real causes of the moral dispossession, however, are very different from those perceived by many people today. This is basically due to strategies of misrecognition of basic facts of life under socialism. For example, it was not possible to continue paying the huge subsidies necessary to keep socialist agriculture running. The socialist dictatorships were successful in hiding the fact of their bankruptcy from the people at the turn of the 1980s. This is the reason why the people connected the hardships they felt during transformation to ›market capitalism‹, although they were the legacy of the failure of socialism to rise its economic efficiency (Merl 1997). When Hann explains the causes that lead some postsocialist citizens back to religion or to a virulent populist nationalism by moral dispossession under capitalism, he is basically wrong. Both trends have been evident since the 1970s and are strongly connected with the socialist order. The archives reveal the strong mood of nationalism. The regimes kept this secret from the public (Kozlov & Mironenko 2005). The search for religion was connected to the failure of socialism to fulfil the spiritual needs of the people.[1] Hann's idea that the pursuit of self-interest was alien to people under socialism stands in contradiction to the widespread use made of corrupt practices for personal gain. The communication found between people and the regimes in letters and denunciations revealed the extent of selfish interest; not only tolerated, but even encouraged by the regimes in order to strengthen their grip on power (Merl 2012, forthcoming). There is ample information on the extent to which people used corrupt practices to manage their private lives. Since many goods necessary for life could not be bought in state trade, people had no alternative to making use of corrupt practices (Merl 2010: 267-279).

1 Victoria Smolkin-Rothrock, The meaning of life. The making of the Soviet ritual cosmos. Paper, ASEEES 43rd Annual Convention, 17.-20. November 2011, Washington, D.C.

The best model for understanding the basic principles of how the socialist economy functioned has been proposed by a Hungarian, János Kornai. In his *Economics of shortages* Kornai argues that the basic problem of socialist economy was the lack of strict budget constraints. Working under weak budget constraints, all enterprises made wasteful use of production forces, capital and labour, leading in the end to an extremely low labour productivity in comparison to market economies (Kornai 1980 & 1992). The main reason for the moral dispossession felt should be seen in just this waste and in the weak budget constraints. While in the market economies of Western Europe only about one or two percent of the workforce was still occupied in agriculture at the turn of the 1990s, in the socialist countries the share was ten to twenty percent. Jobs were retained artificially in the countryside by huge state subsidies, a high demand for labour due to the bad quality of agricultural machinery and the labour intensive production on private plots. This resulted in very low labour productivity in socialist agriculture.

In the market economies the transfer of labour from agriculture to industry and services took place over decades, thus avoiding the social harm visible today in the former socialist countries. As incentives, better working conditions and higher salaries outside agriculture played a decisive role. The outmigration in market economies contributed to a significant increase in labour productivity and in agricultural production as a result of replacing labour by capital. Agricultural production costs were kept stable in this process. Agricultural machinery in the market economies was constructed in accordance with the demands of the peasant farms, while agricultural machinery constructed in the socialist countries only fulfilled the interest of the producers, often doing harm to agricultural production (heavy tractors spoiled the socialist soil, mechanized implements for private plot production were generally missing). In this way, in market economies the machinery optimally replaced labour, in socialist countries a laboursaving effect was hardly existent. In these countries, capital investment thus only contributed to the rise of the costs of agricultural production. At the turn of the 1990s, in the former socialist countries nobody could afford to pay these huge subsidies any longer. A

solution to the problem of setting free the majority of the people previously occupied in agriculture during the transition period was made even more difficult due to the lack of demand for labour outside agriculture. While young persons in general had better chances of transfering to cities, the bulk of the elderly people suffered.

Hann is right to state that Hungarian agriculture in the 1970s worked under market conditions. However, market conditions only influenced the internal relations in agriculture. The overall economic conditions in Hungary did not change. Thus the effects described by Kornai, waste of production forces due to weak budget constraints, were characteristic for the Hungarian economy in the 1970s as well. No significant outmigration of labour from agriculture took place. Small-scale production on private plots with extremely low labour productivity was even supported. Thus, free market conditions restricted to agriculture showed positive effects only for agricultural production. They did not solve the structural problems of agriculture.

The positive effect of market conditions in Hungarian agriculture is visible in the strong contrast to the development of production in other socialist countries. In Hungary in the 1970s, a strong increase in agricultural production and productivity took place, agricultural production doubled over that decade. Only the dissolving of the land communes in China had similar positive effects on production. Agricultural production in all other socialist countries grew very slowly, while the increase of production and productivity was significant in market economies. Characteristics of socialist agriculture were an enormous waste of capital and labour and exploding costs of production, causing a need for ever more state subsidies. Under Brezhnev, the Soviet Union invested huge sums of capital in irrigation and in equipment in the non-black earth territory. This resulted in an annual growth rate of production of only one percent, but it doubled the cost of production per unit. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) even reduced its agricultural productivity during the 1970s by implementing Gruenberg's ideological concept of dividing plant and animal production. Its main effect was to increase aliena-

tion from work. Hungary's agriculture in the 1970s is thus an impressive example of the positive effect of the free market (Vaga 1984; Merl 1988).

What contributed to the strong increase of agricultural production in Hungary? Under market conditions, it became possible to organize production units, working in competition with each other and using machinery and seeds imported from Canada. This contributed to more than double the corn yields in less than one decade. In addition, the agricultural enterprises were allowed to introduce market relations between private small-scale producers and the state enterprise, buying the production from the private producers and selling it to the state. They organized the service of private plot production with state machinery. This experiment was judged to be a failure at the end of the 1970s, due in fact to its success: State subsidies to agriculture remained high. The increase in production thus was costly for the state. As production surpassed internal demand, it would have been necessary to export surpluses. Western Europe, however, was not willing to open its agricultural market to Hungary, and Hungary did not want to export its surpluses to the Soviet Union at prices way below the state subsided producer prices. Thus Hungary had no alternative but to end the experiment by reducing agricultural production! This is the story behind what Hann is telling us about Hungarian agriculture in the 1970s.

I disagree with Hann's argument on collectivisation. Unlike his claims, forced collectivisation was an act of moral dispossession, a repressive act of breaking the will of the former peasantry. It showed lasting effects on agricultural production in all socialist countries by alienating the workforce from production. Even if far fewer persons lost their lives during forced collectivisation in Eastern Europe, it was a process of mass repression and expropriation of the peasantry in each country, causing severe moral dispossession. The proceedings of the meeting of the Hungarian Party boss Rakośi with the new Soviet leadership in early June 1953 provide first-hand detailed information on the crucial facts and disastrous economic results of collectivization from the responsible Com-

munist leadership itself.[2] The final stage of collectivisation in Hungary and the GDR at the turn of the 1960s was a mass campaign of psychological pressure to force the unwilling peasants into the state-run Agricultural Producer Cooperatives. The outcome of collectivisation was connected to severe moral dispossession. Former independent peasants were turned into agricultural workers and had to follow crazy orders from party officials. In all socialist countries many peasants left the countryside, while the new workforce was dominated by labourers with little interest in agriculture (Merl 2011). Although the records of socialist agriculture are different in each country, everywhere the loss of independent decision-making resulted in alienation from work. This was even revealed by social research under socialism. The results of these studies were kept top secret in all socialist countries.[3] The extent to which life in the socialist countryside was perceived as moral dispossession becomes evident in the total lack of work incentives. It can also be seen in the fact that in spite of the huge share of the workforce still occupied in agriculture, most socialist states forced their students to help one month in the fall to bring in the harvest.

In my understanding, »moral dispossession« is a feasible concept for understanding what is going on in the countryside of the former socialist countries only if we take into account that the implementation of the socialist order meant moral dispossession as well.

2 Transcript of the conversations between the Soviet leadership and a Hungarian United Worker's Party delegation in Moscow, 13.6.1953, cited in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 10 (March 1998): 81-86.

3 Interview with the GDR agricultural socialist Jürgen Krambach in Giessen, 1990; Gabriele Eckart, So sehe ick die Sache. Protokolle aus der DDR. Leben im Havelländischen Obstanbaugebiet, Köln 1984.

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Reply

Chris Hann

I thank Stefan Merl for his diverse, thought-provoking comments on my text. Rather than quibble with him about the size of tractors, the social origin of the rural labour force, the national origin of high-yielding varieties of maize or productivity levels in Hungarian agriculture in the 1970s, I shall limit my response to a few broad topics that might be of interest to a wider readership (concerning the Hungarian farms of that era, I generally follow Swain 1985).

I am pleased that Merl and I agree that post socialist villagers have suffered much distress in the years in which their collective farms have been broken up. I would not emphasize the older generation in quite the way that he does, since in some ways it is the young who are nowadays trapped in the countryside, with fewer concrete career options elsewhere than their parents and grandparents once had. But of course, only the older cohorts can make the comparisons with life under socialism and thus have the sense of dispossession I tried to identify. As I understand him, Stefan Merl does not definitively reject my suggested term »moral dispossession«. He simply insists that I acknowledge collectivization itself as an earlier act of moral dispossession. This I am happy to do. It is indisputable that collectivization was a radical intervention by socialist power holders, the destructive consequences of which have been well documented by historians and others. Even in Hungary, where mass collectivization was accomplished between 1959 and 1961 in relatively undramatic circumstances, the evolved moral economy of millions of villagers was exploded. There were some attempts to resist, and countless personal tragedies.

All this I take for granted. The whole world already knows about the follies of collectivization – in China and Africa as well as in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. My provocation was to argue that the re-

versal of this intervention generations later can also be viewed as a destructive act of moral dispossession. This proposition seems counter-intuitive, since property was theoretically returned to its rightful owners, and communities ostensibly freed from oppressive socialist regimes. There is of course enormous variety across Eurasia; the cases that I know best are those of the more ›liberal‹ socialist states such as Hungary and Poland, which by the 1970s were ready to allow a Western anthropologist to undertake fieldwork, while Stefan Merl is more familiar with different sources of knowledge for the more repressive regimes of the USSR and the GDR. I nonetheless insist that my data from Tázlár, however unrepresentative, are indicative of more widespread patterns. The Soviet collective farm gave institutional shape to a form of community which disappeared in the privatized vision legislated in the 1990s. In this sense decollectivization was, at least in some places, a greater shock than collectivization, since it threatened to destroy the local community altogether; villagers had little or nothing in their history to prepare them for playing the role of a capitalist farmer. I tried not to exaggerate. Merl picks up the phrase »brutal methods«, but I used this explicitly to denote the extreme of a spectrum with reference to the case of cotton production in Uzbekistan, as outlined in the ethnography of Tommaso Trevisani. (I have commented more generally about class formation in the post socialist countryside in Hann 2010.)

I agree with Stefan Merl that the ideologies of capitalism and socialism are often a poor guide to economic realities. In terms of property relations and the role of markets, we should expect to find complex combinations rather than the ideal types of either central planning or free markets. Having made this important point in his second paragraph, I am puzzled that Merl proceeds to claim later that Hungary in the 1970s allowed »free market conditions« in the agricultural sector. I would instead say that here, as in other sectors, there was in fact a complex combination of state and market, of public and private. Merl seems to regard any modification of the pure principles of central planning as corruption, but we should not forget that networking and ›informality‹ are also indispensable elements of capitalist market economies. In both cases, I think

we need finer distinctions. Feri has spent most of his life in Tázlár as a networker, always testing the limits of the prevailing system, first socialism and later capitalism. His activities in the 1970s were known to the authorities and tolerated, whereas when the Chairman of the local council in this same period took bribes in expediting the state's electrification programme, he was brought to trial for corruption, convicted and imprisoned. In short, there is a difference between informal networking and corruption. Rural Hungarians have recognized this, and many feel that the latter is more of a problem today than it was under socialism.

This links up to Merl's point concerning the pursuit of self-interest under socialism. It would be absurd to deny this, and I did not do so. Economistic income-maximizing was actively encouraged by the socialist government after 1968, especially in agriculture. I argue that this took place within a moral framework, acknowledged even in the breach by supporters and opponents alike. That is what is completely lacking in the current capitalist economy, allowing nationalist and religious sentiment to fill some of this moral space. If we follow Stephen Gudeman's conceptual framework – noted in my paper – market, calculation and self-interest also add up to a morality, one that is opposed to the morality of the community or ›base‹. But in the subjective perceptions of rural Hungarians, the extension (»cascading« in Gudeman's terminology) of the market has meant a concomitant decline in or loss of all moral constraints; Gudeman's ›dialectic‹ has disintegrated, at least in this ›emic‹ perspective.

I wonder what Stefan Merl means when he alleges »misrecognition of basic facts of life under socialism«. He argues that the subsidies to agriculture were not justified, since they did not improve productivity and entrenched inefficiencies. The shortage theories of János Kornai are invoked in support of this point. To my mind these theories are not especially persuasive in the agricultural sector, where there was so much more scope for individual initiative. I am ready to concede that labour was indeed hoarded here as well, within enterprises and even at the level of the entire rural sector. In the end, the rural population did decline steadily in all socialist countries, but perhaps not as fast as it would have

in a ›pure market‹ framework. So by these criteria, even the relatively successful arrangements of 1970s Hungary (contrary to Merl I believe these persisted through to the end of the regime) are wasteful.

The basic problem is that, in spite of Merl's admission that capitalist markets can be manipulated as well, he seems ultimately critical of any deviation from Hayekian market models. At least the late Kornai is in my estimation a late incarnation of the Austrian school of economics. Elsewhere I have contrasted his approach to that of Karl Polanyi, to my mind a much more attractive representative of »Danubian economics« (Hann 2009). The blinkers of the economists first came to my attention in the early 1990s when David Newbery, a well known economist at Cambridge University, declared in an interview that Hungary's rural population was quite simply living far too comfortably, given the country's overall level of development. For him, it was only logical that post-socialist governments should move promptly to cut back subsidies, and that the rural population should come to terms with a sharp decrease in its living standards. The economist's message was reminiscent of that of Margaret Thatcher: »there is no alternative«. Yet, as everyone knows, farmers in Western Europe have never lived under such conditions. Hungarian farmers of the late socialist era might have enjoyed even more prosperity if Western European states had not closed their markets to most of their products.

This is my main gripe with Stefan Merl, who seems to see no alternative path of rural development to that of capitalist markets, and to believe that the major factor distorting them today in Eastern Europe is attributable to the legacy of socialism. I would argue, with Polanyi, that ›free markets‹ in reality always depend on states, and that a state which chooses to support its rural population, enabling a massive rejuvenation of the village housing stock at the cost of building fewer high rise blocks on urban estates, is perfectly entitled to do so. By the same token, today's European Union has the right to pursue strategies of sustainable rural development that constantly contradict a pure market logic. It should at any rate be possible to have serious discussions about alternative strategies. Merl himself notes that the Hungarian path was very

different from that of the Soviet Union. The Hungarian strategy too had its costs, in terms of under-urbanization and the self-exploitation of rural labour without adequate mechanical support. But so long as the material rewards were attractive, many villagers welcomed the opportunity to remain in agriculture and in their accustomed milieu. The exodus from the countryside continued, of course, in the next generation. In this respect, I do not think the gradualist path implemented in Hungary was eventually very different from the transformation of the peasantry in capitalist economies; the major difference with other peripheral economies in Europe is that few Hungarians abandoned their villages to swell the ranks of a foreign proletariat.

Finally, Stephan Merl is certainly right to remind us of the most basic problems of biographical research. I agree with him that many people (though by no means all) are inclined to reconstruct the past »as they would have liked it to be«. But we must also be wary of constructing it for them as *we* would like them to remember. These academic debates about the nature of socialism are important, but our explanations and evaluations must proceed at a different level. In this paper I was more concerned to *understand* why certain persons in a certain Hungarian generation explain and evaluate the past as they do. I have never conducted formal interviews with Sanyi or Feri, but I have known them personally for more than 35 years. Feri was a toddler when his family was first branded *kulák*, and a schoolboy at the time of mass collectivization. His attitude toward socialism in the 1970s still resembled that of his parents and grandparents, and was quite different from the way he sees that regime today – and this was my central point. In Tázlár, even diehard opponents of collectivization have come to see the transformation which occurred around 1990 as more morally upsetting than the transformation they experienced around 1960.

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Generations of change or »birds in a cage«

1968 and the problem of generations in Slovak civic dissent

Elena Glushko

> I consider the years 1968 to '69 to be a generation-forming experience because of the civic liberation from fear and the liberalisation (cultural, political) that they brought. Those who stood up for freedom through demonstrations and general strikes in 1989 grew up with it (Budaj 2010).
>
> Hl'adali sme pravdu
>
> Juraj Kuniak (Urbanec 2005: 133)

Introduction[1]

As is well known, the year 1968 has symbolic meaning in the West as well as in socialist countries, although this meaning certainly has different undertones. Nevertheless, one can say that the generational issue unites the two experiences of 1968: in both the West and Czechoslovakia, it was a time when young people felt that it was possible to create their own social realities, and in both places their ideas were informed by a leftist, Marxist ideology (Franc & Holubec 2009: 11-14). But whereas in the West 1968 is now mainly perceived as a year of student revolutions, the peak of hippie culture, the symbol of the triumph of freedom and love, in the socialist camp this year was marked by the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, when the building of »socialism with a hu-

1 I would like to thank Peter Križan, who suggested the idea of the paper, and also Ján Budaj, the leader of the Tender Revolution and one of the most famous dissidents of the described period, to whom I will refer to quite often.

man face« came to a violent end. As Martin Franc argues, the protest movement after 22nd of August 1968 was comprised mostly of young people (Franc & Holubec 2009: 17). Jacques Rupnik generally sees more differences than parallels between 1968 in Europe and 1968 in socialist countries, as based on evidence from participants (Rupnik 2008). The most obvious similarity is the aspirations to freedom that were common to East and West; however, if the atmosphere in the West was defined by students, often with anarchist views, then in the East the social climate was defined by people who already had a certain social and political status. It should be also emphasised that, partly because of this fact, the reforms in Czechoslovakia took place within the socialist paradigm – or at least, this was what those who carried them out believed. These events left their mark on all who witnessed them and had an impact on the entire subsequent historical period. Historians and memoirists often use ›Generation 1968‹ as shorthand: in relation to the West, it refers first and foremost to those who participated in student unrests, that is, those who were at university at the time and were born between 1940 and 1950. At the same time, if for Czechoslovakia we use the term ›Generation 1968‹ to refer to all of those people for whom this year's experience proved decisive, it ends up being a much higher figure (since the main actors in 1968 Czechoslovakia were people who had already achieved a certain degree of professional success and had therefore been born in the 1930s at the latest), but even those who were children at the time, such as the priest Jozef Roman (*1960) have a heightened perception of the significance of this year.[2]

Until 1989, August 1968 remained the most recent historical milestone in Czechoslovakia, the reference point from which the current situation derived. The Prague Spring of 1968 was the result of a process of rapid weakening of the political and social regime that took place after Alexander Dubček replaced Antonín Novotný as General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) on 3rd of January 1968. In

2 Father Jozef Roman's lecture at the seminar on church history, Moscow State University, 20.5.2011. Audio recording in author's archive.

April 1968, the CPCz launched its »action programme«, which purportedly was based on the XX. Congress of CPSU. This programme called for abolishing the centralised economic policy; adopting a new, more democratic constitution, allowing people to associate according to their interests; guaranteeing freedom of speech and freedom of enterprise; limiting the functions of the State Security. It also denounced one-party leadership (Rok 1969: 103-146). Even before that April, censorship in the media had in fact disappeared, and journalists were actively taking advantage of this state of affairs to become more and more radical. A text by writer Ludvík Vaculík, »Two Thousand Words«, appeared in June 1968 in one of the major newspapers, calling for the eradication of the existing communist leadership. Alexander Dubček quickly lost control over the situation and Moscow could not have been happy with this fact.

One should not forget that one requirement *was* satisfied in the autumn of 1968: the federalisation of the country, a demand that was supported by Gustáv Husák.

After the invasion by the Warsaw Pact armies on August 21st, the country gradually entered a phase of ›normalisation‹. Party purges took place, and any who had taken action during the Prague Spring were excluded or ›scratched out‹ (an important difference) from the CPCz and often lost their jobs, especially in the larger Czech cities. These ›ex-communists‹, as they were called in Czechoslovakia, formed the basis of the dissident movement for the subsequent two decades – at least in Czech lands, where the persecution was more severe than in Slovakia.

The second-largest group in the opposition movement in Czechoslovakia was made up of young people who in 1968 had been studying at the universities or just passed their A-level exams and for various reasons had subsequently been excluded from educational institutions or simply did not wish to continue their studies with the prospect of living and working in the newly established system. This is the group that will receive the most attention in this article.

The Prague Spring is a very popular research topic, and the publications and documents related to it, as well as studies on its various social movements, number in the hundreds.[3] But German researcher Peter Birke contends that more attention is paid to 1968 in Germany than in the Czech Republic, and this gap cannot be filled by these scientific publications (Franc & Holubec 2009: 20-21). I believe that this fact is most likely connected to the different role that neo-Marxism and leftist ideology plays in the West and in post-socialist areas. In any case, the generational aspect of this issue has so far been largely the lot of memoirists, but now the situation seems to be slowly changing thanks to the work of Goltz (2011). There is one recent article I am aware of that deals with the generational issue in connection to 1968: Vrzgulová (2009), which examines the generation of people born between 1938 and 1950, both those who were political activists and those who were not. Vrzgulová observes that her interviewees often called themselves »the lost generation«, one that »lost its ideals and its opportunities to bring its own plans for the future into reality« (Vrzgulová 2009: 526).

Generally, there is a certain historical and historiographical tradition: when authors speak of Czechoslovakia, they mean mostly Czech lands. But Slovakia and the later Czech Republic lived separate histories for hundreds of years, so that even while they were united under one government and one name, their respective developments still proceeded differently. My paper is dedicated to Slovakia, first because this area is often overlooked in the literature, and second because it seems that a number of milestones in Czech history might look different from this perspective – this is particularly true for the period starting in November 1989.

3 Among the recent publications on the history of 1968 one should mention at least: Karner et al. (eds.) 2008; Londák et al. (eds.) 2009; Stoliarik (ed.) 2010.

In his article on the »forgotten generation« of dissidents, Slovak philosopher Fedor Blaščák demonstrates that a history of the »normalisation« period is »nonexistent« in the modern Slovak historiography and states that:

> The change in our social environment in 1989 brought with it, among other things, the insight that that which we are presently proud of is the result of the activities of very small sectors of society, sometimes even of lone individuals. It is strange that these social sub-structures – in sociology they would be, quantitatively, on the same level as statistical errors – represent almost the whole of those segments of our recent past to which we can relate, because we still understand them (Blaščák 2008: 555).

In Slovak historiography, there is a well-known expression to characterise Slovak resistance to the communist regime: »islands of positive deviation« (Bútora & Bútorová 1993: 123). This phrase emphasises the paucity of the dissident movement in this country, but it describes only civic, secular opposition and the human rights movement in its most pure form. However the Catholic Church in Slovakia also played a huge role in the ideological resistance, while acting in the underground. The human rights movement in Slovakia, as well as strictly political opposition, was dominated by a small group of intellectuals who were former communists, most of them from Bratislava (Dominik Tatarka, Miroslav Kusý, Jozef Jablonický etc.). In Bratislava and in Košice (in spite of geography, independent-minded people from Košice were connected primarily with people in Prague and not with those in Bratislava), young underground artists organised their unofficial performances and exhibitions, but they themselves did not overestimate their role in the struggle against the regime.

In other former Soviet bloc countries the history of opposition to the Communist regime is one of the most popular topics within national history (for example in Poland and the Czech Republic). In Russia there are at least some institutions interested in the subject (primarily Memorial International). Against this background, the unpopularity of this subject in Slovakia seems odd, and my essay should be seen as an attempt to

contribute to changing this. My main sources will be personal accounts, oral history sources, interviews and published memoirs by members of the different generations.

The methodological base for my paper is Karl Mannheim's theory of generations. Mannheim introduced into scientific use such terms as ›age cohorts‹ and ›generational units‹ which are formed by historical experience that is shared by a group of people the same age (Mannheim 1964: 547-548).[4] I present some examples here that confirm this observation, arguing that if one examines this broad 1968 age range in more detail, it becomes clear that although in Czechoslovakia this year made a significant impression on all generations who experienced and actively participated in it, different generational units have been influenced by it in different ways. In the present article I focus mostly on two generational units and their reaction to the challenges of 1968: I call these the ›Post-War Generation‹ (1945-1950) and ›Generation 52‹ (1950-1954) and emphasise the latter as less is known about it. Moreover, I will narrow my subject to those members of these generations who in some way became part of the »islands of positive deviation« (Bútora & Bútorová 1993: 123), explicitly those who practiced dissent or were part of the anti-communist resistance. Older people who had been able to enter higher social and political strata before 1968 often were removed from their positions afterward and pushed underground, but they remained communist nevertheless. The younger generation, in contrast, experienced their psychologically formative years during the ›golden sixties‹; when ›normalisation‹ came, they were already much more independent from communist ideology. Using material on the most ›radical‹ of these cases, I will show in this article how important 1968 was for these generations, even in their later ›underground‹ life. In the last part of the article, I will talk about some generational issues in the discourse of the Tender Revolution of 1989.

4 More about Karl Mannheim's generational theory can be found in the introduction.

The ›golden sixties‹ and their harsh end for young people

In Czechoslovakia, the second half of the 1960s was a period of ›thaw‹ that arrived late in comparison to other socialist countries, a time of social and political transformation during which the borders were at least partly opened. Literary critic and publicist Milan Šimečka, who was kicked out of the Communist Party after 1968, earned his living through manual labour, and became a well-known *samizdat* author, wrote of 1968:

> Then almost in a single moment public life was born and many people for the first time in their lives began to see politics as human business and not as tedious and infinitely boring […] bullying coming from somewhere above (Šimečka 1990: 10).

Young people who were then just starting their lives grew attached to democratic (if perhaps social-democratic) ideals – their highest value was freedom; they believed that the development of the country and the state should be under the control of its people, and that all paths were open to talented youth. Milan Bočkay (*1946), who studied at that time at the School of Applied Arts in Bratislava, has the following memories of the period:

> It was a time of social fermentation that was later inaccurately defined as the ›golden sixties‹. It is said that one's basic life-orientation is formed in secondary school, that secondary education is the most important, and that other, later things are already only superstructure, a chiselling of the original decision. I and many of my peers can only confirm it […]. All alumni […] recall the School of Applied Arts fondly. Under the authoritarian regime it was one of the few islands of bohemian relaxation and local libertarianism (Valoch & Bočkay 2005: 133-134).

Here one should recollect Karl Mannheim's statement that the most important years for the formation of the self are the years of early adolescence (Mannheim 1964: 536-537). The 1960s were the heyday of Czechoslovak cinema; borders were opening to cultural influences from abroad, and everyone could listen to Rock & Roll and the Beatles. One of the members of Generation 52 recollects:

> The sixties were something so amazingly original in the global context. The world was totally changing. One could see this in science, outer space, in the arts. A completely new generation of rock, beat, jazz bands and what have you was coming; they were unhappy with the existing state of affairs and began to bring elements of theatre, mythology, sexuality to the scene, strengthening the experience of music and light through different artistic elements. And since I had personal experience with the sixties, which produced several top music bands even in our corner of the world, I found that the freedom of expression has no limits (Kišová 2011).

Precisely because of this feeling of unity with the Western culture and freedom, contemporaries sometimes conflate both ›Western‹ 1968 and the Prague Spring:

> […] something of the sixties remained, and it changed the world. I think it was the fact that the era of the Cold War did not end in blood. It was the first time when the weapons produced were not used. And it was because of this very amalgam of hopes and illusions, this Beatles-esque fog in our heads (make love, not war), that when certain gentlemen – men of the same age as the Beatles, in fact – took power in the years afterward (power that included the notorious nuclear briefcase), they did not panic, and they allowed people to disassemble the Wall (Budaj 2009).

In addition, the Second Vatican Council took place from 1962 to 1965 and marked a new era in the life of the Catholic Church. The second half of the 1960s was a period when new liberal trends were flourishing in the lives of Slovak Catholics.[5] The spirit of freedom and renewal was on the rise. The sixties in Slovakia were a period when a new paradigm was being sought in both social and religious life. In some churches there were special youth masses celebrated – with guitars – the so-called big beat masses. In Košice, for example, these were held from 1968 to 1970 by priest Bartolomej Urbanec; young people arrived from all over Košice

5 According to 1950 statistics, Catholics constituted almost 83 % of the population in Slovakia, cf. Pešek & Barnovský 1999: 13.

(Urbanec 2005). The year 1968 marks a sort of ›coming out‹ for many illegal priests and monks; the Peace Movement of Catholic Clergy (MHKD), a pro-regime movement, was demolished, and the former chairman of the Secretariat for Church Affairs was dismissed from his position (Váško 1999). But not all religious activists from the previous period really trusted »socialism with a human face«; some of them had survived more than ten years in prison and did not believe in any possibility of the regime's transformation. This was the position of the Salesian order in particular, as well as such figures as Father Stanislav Krátký and Felix Maria Davídek, the latter of whom was secretly consecrated bishop at the time (Krátký & Mazanec 2004: 64-65).

The 21st August 1968 invasion by the Warsaw Pact armies was a milestone, and the period of ›thaw‹ in social and religious life in Slovakia came to an end. Milan Bočkay, who returned to Czechoslovakia from a trip to the USSR on 22nd August 1968, described these days as follows:

> The return to occupied Czechoslovakia is sad. The week is full of impassioned statements, promises and resoluteness, but the week of dying has also just started. We join the previous generations with lifetime traumas (Valoch & Bočkay 2005: 134).

But this date was not a precise end as such; most of the consequences became clear only later, and the tempo of these changes was the slowest in church affairs: the guitar-led masses of Bartolomej Urbanec lasted until 1970. Nevertheless, for people sensitive to the socio-political atmosphere in society, it was already clear by the autumn of 1968 that the situation in the country was irrevocably out of the people's control; they had either lost all of their career prospects because of their previous activities or, if their young age meant that at 1968 they had not yet had time to be involved in any noticeable activities (the case of Generation 52), their possible professional careers would mean the rejection of notions of freedom and democracy. The older ones equated the situation to that of twenty or even thirty years earlier (the Stalin era and the Nazi occupation) and their conclusion was that there was not much difference between Soviet communism and Hitler's fascism (Šimečka 1990: 14).

Many memoirs about this period also mention national frustration and fear; it is easy to imagine how difficult this was to bear for the young people who remembered the recent atmosphere of unity and excitement. Now the time of disappointment had come, disappointment in everything and everybody, beginning with the ruling elite and including fellow citizens. Igor Kapišinský (*1947), now an astronomer and philosopher who back then had been a participant in Urbanec's »big beat masses«, recollects rather bitterly in a letter to the priest:

> Those were beautiful times, and even more beautiful ones were envisaged, but for that terrible August 1968. But that August definitely persuaded me that the euphoria of the youth and their desire for ›new spirituality‹ is unfortunately a superficial and rather emotional thing, not something intimate and solid […] (do you remember how few people participated in the youth mass on Wednesday, immediately after the arrival of troops?). I remember also other annoying and ugly moments that we, university students at the time, cannot boast of […] (Urbanec 2005: 120).

Fedor Gál (*1945) wrote on his web page:

> During those days I had a feeling that we were united and were not afraid of anything. It did not last long […]. Then most people shut up and kept quiet for decades. But the sixties vaccinated us with the smell and taste of freedom, and, on 21st of August 1968, with its cost as well. My generation lived with these emotions until November 1989.[6]

The political leaders who became symbols of the Prague Spring and of Generation 68 in its strictest sense signed the humiliating Moscow Protocol,[7] and others were silent. Young people who believed in the ideas of

6 Fedor Gál (undated): *Srpen 68*. http://www.fedorgal.cz/srpen-1968.

7 Moscow Protocol, or the Protocol of the Negotiations of the ČSSR and USSR Delegations. A document signed by Czechoslovak leaders in Moscow, 26.8.1968. The document secured the necessity of purges in Czechoslovakia, especially in the media, as well as the prospects for closer cooperation in the field of international relations between Czechoslovakia

›humane socialism‹ had a feeling of betrayal, and some of them realised that they could not anticipate help from anyone except themselves:

> It is understandable that my generation, which around the year 1970 was twenty years old, expected the older generation – which was not at secondary school but in public positions – that those people would express themselves and would stand in opposition to the ›normalisers‹. And afterwards seven years of silence came […]. They were famous, great men. If he snapped his fingers, the West would listen to him […]. This was his story, he betrayed his story! We were angry at him, my generation, because when you become a national leader, you can't just start to care about your [own] garden […]. They threw me out from the university, and I was not Dubček; I just expressed a view.[8]

Ways to live freely: The artistic underground and Generation 52

The pressure of ›normalisation‹ in Slovakia was not as high as in Czech lands and in Prague in particular; however, one certainly can speak about dissident groups in Slovakia and the true resistance movement of Catholics. People entered the underground in different ways: ›ex-communists‹ who had been thrown out of the party simply had no other choice since no one would give them a decent job (Šimečka 1990). The same fate often befell people from the Post-War Generation, such as former students of the School of Applied Arts who were excluded from the artists' union (Valoch & Bočkay 2005: 136). However, there were also those who by their own decision chose the path of refusing the chance for a ›normal‹ life and intentionally went underground. Martin Milan Šimečka, son of Milan Šimečka, recollects of some of these people:[9] »These were

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and the USSR. On the history of 1968 from the point of view of a high party official, including the process of negotiation in Moscow (see for example Mlynář 1980).

8 Interview with Ján Budaj, 4.5.2010. Author's archive. On Alexander Dubček and his life in the years from 1970 to 1989, see for example Dubček 2002.

9 The artists Vladimír Archleb (1953-2007) and Igor Kalný (1957-1987).

people who wanted to live freely, and some of them sacrificed their lives for that. I became a dissident because I basically had no choice – I could not study and so on. They had [this choice]« (Šimečka Martin Milan 2009). It is interesting to see how these people explained the logic of their behaviour – in their explanations 1968 is mentioned again and again:

> I belong to the generation, for which, I guess, the year [19]68 meant the strongest challenge, because those who were older were already pursuing their careers. They took it rationally, but those who were 15, we who were painting on the walls against the tanks, we got hit directly in the heart, so to speak. It was as if you had put a bird into a cage.[10]

Oleg Pastier (*1952), a member of the Slovak artistic underground and editor of the *samizdat* cultural periodicals *Fragment*, *Kontakt* and *Fragment K*, recollects:

> I belong to a generation that in the critical years of 1968-1970 went to high schools. We got our school certificates, and ›normalisation‹ arrived. During our adolescence, during the most sensitive age, we became accustomed to a more open society. We could read great books, magazines, we could listen to any music; theatres staged perfect performances, directors shot wonderful movies and received international awards for them; and suddenly all this ended overnight. A grey, dull period came, and those older ones began to change coats. They stopped talking about things they had discussed quite openly a year or two earlier. Suddenly we found ourselves in a space that was awful. We understood it, but we could not accept it (Pastier 2007).

In another interview, Oleg Pastier describes why he became a part of an »island of a positive deviation«:

10 Interview with Ján Budaj, 4.5.2010. Author's archive.

> In my circle of people in Bratislava, we understood that if we wanted to feel at least a bit freer, we had to invent something. We wanted to read and listen to what we considered important. Thus our samizdat emerged – it was not an activity of dissidents, that is, people who had been banned and excluded from society for their views. We were not excluded from anywhere for our views; we just did not accept ›the play on normalisation‹ and created ›the second culture‹, which was self-sufficient and independent. We made our own exhibitions, published books and magazines, even shot featured and animated films. And we endured like that until November 1989 (Pastier 2007).

Thus the difference between the ›life stories‹ of Generation 52 and the Post-War Generation consists primarily of the fact that those who were born in 1945 and later had already to some extent been established as individuals and chosen their life path when the ›normalisation‹ started, while for younger people the experience of the Prague Spring and the tanks that destroyed it often became decisive. Teens who grew accustomed to living with a sense of freedom and enjoying a variety of cultural experiences were not always able to adapt to the new social situation when all of this ended before their eyes. The reality of the »normalisation society« seemed to them unbearable: »to die in the socialist camp is to go from grey to grey«.[11]

The influence of ›Western‹ 1968 led to the emergence of the hippie movement and of communes in Czechoslovakia. A member of the Post-War Generation, a prominent activist of the Catholic underground who only resigned from his decently paid job in a scientific institute in 1983, said the following about his friends from that group:

> These were people on the margins, but why I was attracted to them? They had the courage to reject the regime. They were very poor; they were stokers, meaning that in winter they worked and in summer mostly lived as tramps (Mikloško & Glushko 2010).

11 Peter Kalmus, *Fragmenty z môjho života – Čiara smrti*. Undated [Praha 1973]. Personal archive Peter Kalmus, p. 2.

In Czech lands, people of this generation[12] founded such famous underground rock bands as DG-307 and Plastic People of the Universe; many oppositionally-minded people from Košice and from eastern Slovakia in general preferred to maintain contacts with the Prague artistic underground, rather than the one in Bratislava. The Košice artist Peter Kalmus (*1953) may serve as an example:

> I actively participated in everything that was happening at that time, and when in our country the conditions changed and ›normalisation‹ came, I lived practically every day in the underground environment. Step by step, I let this all ripen inside me, and I did not let them take away my freedom of expression. When I wanted to have long hair, I had long hair; when I wanted to have something pink, I had something pink. During the twenty years of normalisation, through appearance and accesories a person could still differ from the crowd of manipulated, normalised, fearful, handicapped people. The main theorist of the underground was Ivan Martin Jirous.[13] He even worked as an educated art critic, and he pointed out that we must make no compromises. When you don't feel something, don't do it; otherwise it will be the end, the trap (Kišová 2011).

Nevertheless, of course, unofficial, independent cultural activities used to bring together members of different generations. For example, one action that was to be an official triumph of underground art but ultimately never happened was Three Sunny Days (3SD, 1980). Artists of different ages were supposed to participate: from Stanislav Filo (*1937) and Július Koller (1939-2007), through the Post-War Generation – Milan Bočkay, Klára Bočkayová (*1948), Rudolf Sikora (*1946), L'ubomír Ďurček (*1948), Dezider Tóth (*1947), to Generation 52 – Vladimír Archleb

12 For example Milan Hlavsa and Pavel Zajíček (both *1951).

13 Ivan Martin Jirous (1944-2011) was a Czech poet, art critic and public figure; one of the most famous people of the Czech cultural underground during the socialist era.

(1953-2007), Jaroslav Štuller (*1954) and others. According to Ján Budaj, the thing which united them was »hope« (Rusinová 2001: 268-269).

On the borders of art: performances as a means of individual psychotherapy

For those who worked as underground artists in socialist Czechoslovakia, ›art was more than art‹ – it is clear that they used to think about its nature, limits and borders. Quite logically, events and performances became an especially popular artistic genre at the time, as these allowed for balancing on the border of social activism and political protest.

In particular, Peter Kalmus from Košice was (and still is) quite attached to this genre. He was always quite sensitive towards political life in his country. In a memoir, he recalled how much hope and encouragement the emergence of the Charter 77 gave to him, and how much he was depressed by the persecutions of his friends who had signed it and by the passivity of his fellow citizens; and, moreover, the doubts he started to have about traditional forms of art:

> The year 1978, if we are to speak about the political behaviour of the population of Czechoslovakia, was terrible […]. 99 percent of those eligible to vote masochistically cast their ballot for political scoundrels. I was quite obviously disgusted. Naturally, in all this time (1968-1989) I never went to vote.
>
> […] In 1978, I became definitely sure that looking at people caused me more unpleasant than pleasant feelings. After that became clear to me, I walked the city streets with my head down, and preferred to search patiently on the ground for metal ›horseshoes‹ fallen from shoes or their fragments. So I was creating the reliquary. Reliquary I.
>
> I started to realize very seriously and clearly that in such a situation, the making of art events had almost no meaning or purpose. The event in the given context, of course, should emerge from internal views. And what more important and meaningful action

> could one imagine than the declaration of the ›Charter 77‹ signatories? At that time (and I believe this to this day) none.[14]

The artistic group founded and led by Ján Budaj at the turn of the 1980s, was called, characteristically enough, the »Temporary Society of Intense Experiencing« (Dočasná spoločnosť intenzívneho prežívania). The purpose of its actions was to achieve »the transformation of an individual's consciousness, purification and regaining of the lost reality« (Budaj 1981). Its activities combined the elements of art, social work and psychotherapy (ibid.) since in society of that time »an individual is not deprived of – let's say – freedom of expression, but of the need for freedom of expression« (ibid.). This work on the transformation of consciousness required a lot of accuracy and could be carried out only on an individual basis, exactly because of the trauma of 1968:

> Today attempts to change social consciousness on a mass scale are rather discredited. The atmosphere of disappointment and sobering disillusionment is the result of experience with the ›great leap‹ of the sixties – a collective leap for a new culture, behaviour, for a new social consciousness (ibid.).

Such a result, according to Budaj, could be achieved through performance. Mira Keratová, curator of two exhibitions based on Budaj's photographic archive, wrote an article on his performances in socialist times (Keratová 2008; Fotograf Gallery 2011). Already in the 1980s, however, Budaj had started to dedicate himself to openly political issues; some of his activities will be mentioned later.

The issue of generations in Tender Revolution discourse

The problem of ›intergenerational dialogue‹ during the regime change in Czechoslovakia in 1989 and subsequent years has still not been discussed sufficiently. In the present section I will argue that at that time, there was a father-son conflict taking place: the ›sons‹ belonged to the Post-War

14 Peter Kalmus, Suicidálna performance sa nekoná (Nie som Anna Kareninová), Košice 1980. Personal archive Peter Kalmus.

and younger generations (it seems there was a certain tension between them as well), the ›fathers‹ to the ›ex-communists‹ whose triumph and decline was in 1968. November 1989 gave hope for the embodiment of all the liberal democratic values that were nurtured by Western-oriented younger generations; however, as will be stated below, their dreams were not destined to materialise. Nevertheless, for many people of these generations November 1989 has remained a symbol of the triumph of democracy and human dignity:

> November 1989 is undoubtedly one of the most important landmarks in Slovak twentieth century history. One can even say that it marks a watershed with no precedent in Slovakia's modern history. November 1989 represents primarily the transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime. It represents the return of the human individual to history, the return to the individual of his humanity and dignity. It represents the return to natural diversity, to plurality, to the comprehension that we all form one universal human species, but at the same time we are different. In this sense, it represents a return to modern European civilisation as it develops in its historical mainstream, beginning with the eighteenth century. This respect for the fundamental characteristics of European culture – diversity of opinions, attitudes, interests, values – in November 1989 found its expression in the establishment of political pluralism, in the possibility to decide freely, to choose and elect freely, to participate in power and perceive the power itself not as the instrument to control others, but as a possibility to manage public affairs together with others (Zajac 2001).

An anti-communist public platform formed in November 1989 in Slovakia was called Public against Violence (abbreviated in Slovak to VPN) and had the same function as the Civic Forum in Prague. One should mention, however, that the branches of the Civic Forum were first formed elsewhere in Slovakia, first of all in Košice, places that were always ›closer‹ to Prague, in contempt of geography; only later were these transformed into VPN. Peter Kalmus was one of the founding members of such a Civic Forum in Košice (Kišová 2011).

VPN and analogous movements included members of all generations, but primarily those who had been born in the 1940s and 1950s. It seems that people who had time to get some experience ›inside the system‹ were better suited to political activities in the rapidly changing conditions after the Tender Revolution. A great many leading figures of VPN emerged out of the environmental movement – the Slovak Union of Defenders of Nature and Landscape (Slovak: SZOPK) – which in the 1980s was something in between an official organisation and an opposition movement. Nevertheless, Budaj stated that even among environmentalists, the attitude towards protest activities was far from positive (Antalová 1998: 68).

Although Ján Budaj, one of the most ›stubborn‹ Slovak dissidents, played an important role in SZOPK[15] and later on became the de facto leader of the VPN for some time, his closest associates and other heads of the movement had never lived in the underground, and during socialist times they found it perfectly possible to combine their ›protest‹ views with an official job, usually at different research institutes. Generally speaking, in socialist Slovakia »opposition was weaker, and the dividing line between supporters and opponents of the communist regime was less clear« than in Czech lands (Bútora & Bútorová 1993: 123). That some leading actors had such a background of course had a certain influence on the work of VPN and on Slovak political life in 1989 and later. As Vladimír Ondruš, an environmentalist, famous member of VPN and Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia in the years 1989 to 1991 recalls:

> By January [1990], many activists had started to return to their civil employment and new career opportunities had opened up for some […]. For example, Peter Zajac took over the leadership of one of the research institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Fedor Gál founded research centres […]. What was an advantage for the VPN civic initiative in November 1989 – its colourful, ar-

15 In particular, in 1987 he was the initiator and editor of the famous *samizdat* edition *Bratislava/nahlas*, devoted to environmental issues in the Slovak capital.

> tistically and humanistically oriented structure – came to be the cause of its destruction after the new year of 1990. Outstanding artists, scientists, professors and publicists were able at the right time to get people to protest, to speak out publicly against arrogant authorities. But they did not want to enter politics, to stand for parliamentary election and to build the organisational structure of a political movement. Few were willing to take personal responsibility in a political office, to give up their original occupations and way of life precisely when the possibilities to fully apply their talents and abilities were opening up (Ondruš 2009: 39-40).

Ondruš holds that one of the factors that led to the subsequent crisis in the ranks of VPN was when Ján Budaj was eliminated from political life, thanks, among others, to his colleagues from the Post-War generation (Ondruš 2009: 41-43). In the atmosphere of agentomania that dominated the Czechoslovak public sphere in the first years after the regime change, Budaj's signature on the agreement on cooperation with State Security was the cause of his elimination.[16] It should be mentioned, however, that other participants in these events blamed the headquarters of VPN and Ján Budaj personally for a certain ›secretiveness‹: they did not permit other people to enter their circle where the decisions were made (Antalová 1998: 69-70).

After the first impulse towards unity, the contradictions within Slovak society naturally intensified, including conflicts between generations. Writer Anton Hykisch (*1932) recalls how he and his colleagues in 1990 went to talk to Budaj to establish the relationship between the VPN and the distinguished intellectual elite of Slovakia. Hykisch's presentation method is of particular interest here: »Before us, the veterans of 1968, a revolutionary is sitting – with dark places in his biography (who does not have them?), lively, energetic but rather troubled« (Hykisch 2004: 58). As

16 In this article, it is not possible to go into the subject deeply. One should presume, though, that at that time the question of being or not being a State Security agent was a question of political success, not of facts. The best-researched book which deals with this issue remains at the moment the above-mentioned book by Vladimír Ondruš (2009).

one can see, on the one hand Hykisch somehow considers 1968 as ›belonging‹ to his generation, the generation that once in all honesty worked to build Communism, and at the end of the sixties tried to attach to it a ›human face‹. Hykisch's attitude towards the relatively young ›revolutionary‹ is a mix of respect, sympathy and condescension. To sum up the meeting, Hykisch says:

> An interesting meeting, a bit of a symbolic one. A meeting of 1968 with the year 1989. The meeting of two revolutions. But somehow an unfortunate one. Even though we all thought then that the same freedom was important for all of us, now in the first year of freedom it is already clear that the current takeover goes much further. I accept the point of Budaj's irate and painful comments on Čič[17] and Schuster,[18] the communists and ›covert communists‹ who still sit in parliament and want to continue to control Slovakia. However, on Pal'o Števček's[19] and others' faces I see that his words aggravate them. They have a different vision. ›Reformed communists‹ (even if they later finally leave the Communist Party of Slovakia) still have left-wing roots which date back somewhere to social democracy. The vision of a fair and influential state, of scientifically built society, of social equality, is still alive (Hykisch 2004: 60).

17 Milan Čič (1932), was a Slovak lawyer and politician, 1961-1990 member of the Communist Party of Slovakia, 1990-1991 member of the VPN, 1988-1989 Minister of Justice of the Slovak Socialist Republic, 1989-1990 Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, 1993-2000 President of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic.

18 Rudolf Schuster (1934) was a Slovak politician, 1964-1990 member of the Communist Party of Slovakia, 1989-1990 Speaker of the Slovak National Council, 1999-2004 President of Slovakia.

19 Pavol Števček (1932-2003) was a Slovak writer, involved in cultural renewal at the end of the 1960s.

The conviction is generally rather widespread that the vision of a liberal-democratic society according to the Western European model (and introduced into Slovak politics by the narrow circle of dissidents) was extremely ill-suited to Slovak society.

Alexander Dubček quite logically became the symbol of 1968 in Czechoslovakia; the fact that he was ultimately not offered anything in the government except the representative function of Chairman of the Federal Assembly, along with his speedy death, lead Hykisch to conclude: »Simply speaking, the bridge between the years 1968 and 1989 was weakened and eventually collapsed, decayed, into the river of time«. But in the next sentence he had to admit: »Dubček did not have time or could not shout out the liberating word. (Perhaps he even did not have it, who knows?)« (Hykisch 2004: 63).

In an introductory remark to a series of memorial talks on the formation of VPN, sociologist Soňa Szomolányi describes the role of this older generation as follows:

> The political vision of this generation of ›68 people‹ remained for the most part at the level of the idea of ›socialism with a human face‹, the idea that socialism can be reformed. However, it must be said, in the first election their faces […] raised confidence in the continuity of development, and their political language was easier to understand at the level of social consciousness of the Slovak population. Thus the fact that VPN won the election in 1990 was not because of its programme, which was called liberal-democratic, but mainly because of the illusion and the belief that development would go towards a kind of ›socialism with a human face‹. The not very large group of liberal intellectuals in fact represented only a thin layer of society, and how thin it was we learned only too late after November. In November, this small group articulated the interests of society as a whole, and I see its greatest importance in the fact that it played the main role in opening up political space towards pluralism (Antalová 1998: 16-17).

However, Soňa Szomolányi also believes that, more than anybody else, those who moderated demonstrations on the squares in November 1989 contributed to the fact that regime change in the country was of a non-violent nature (Antalová 1998: 18).

The conclusion by Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová in a collection of essays published on the occasion of Czechoslovakia's division into two independent states on 1st of January 1993 sounds like a requiem for the hopes of the Slovak Tender Revolution:

> We are inclined to believe that the breakup of Czechoslovakia is primarily the result of the failure of the first generation of post-communist elites, which was in power in the years 1990 to 1992. They were not able to cope with the difficult processes of changes that were taking place simultaneously at three levels of social reality: on the level of creating a new political system and new institutions, on the level of market economy foundations, and ultimately on the level of culture, meaning the creation of a new identity, of a new ›social cement‹, new cultural and socio-political ties, of new identities, including ethnic and national identities (Bútora & Bútorová 1993: 121).

Twenty years later

Now, more than twenty years later, there are two points in time to which the members of the Post-War Generation and Generation 52 always return – 1968 and 1989. The presence of 1968 in their recent writings is sufficiently illustrated by quotations in the paper at hand. They are inclined to perceive Communism as the worst possible regime in the world and to equate it with Nazism:

> Nazism and Communism were linked by the fact that both ideologies were criminal; both had been responsible for millions of lost lives, both benefited from fear and the restriction of people's rights and freedoms. Even if the one appealed to the National Socialist utopia and the other to proletarian internationalism and class struggle – Without psychopathic leaders, ready flunkies, hired

> killers, without mendacious mass propaganda, without servile media, without corrupted intellectuals and without the so-called silent (mainly, however, timid and cowardly) majority, they would not have achieved anything (Gál 2010).
>
> Like many people, I have real experience with obviously the worst political system ever devised in the history of this planet. This system not only suppressed religion, it suppressed sexuality, freedom, science, creation, every free expression of human activity. It was crazy and monstrous. Therefore, I am shocked when nowadays people perceive Hitler's National Socialism as a greater evil (Kišová 2011).

However, although November 1989 was indisputably the triumph of democracy, the development of the country during the years which followed did not satisfy the revolution's actors. Members of the Post-War Generation are still more or less engaged in the political and public life of the country (Peter Zajac, Fedor Gál etc.); all of them openly express their dissatisfaction with current state of affairs in the politic sphere. Many former dissidents from Generation 52 are now staying away from politics, and some of them openly state that »politics is crime« (Hoffman 2009):

> If I had to answer the question of whether it is still possible to manage public affairs with the aid of political structures, I would say that it is not possible anymore. We have passed the point where there was still a chance to return a democratic dimension to politics. Politicians are useless to us, regardless of whether they are aware of it or not. In the best case they represent only themselves, in the worst – economic mafia.

Ivan Hoffman (*1952), an independent Slovak singer and *samizdat* author until 1990 and a Czech journalist after 1993, is an author of only one musical album of songs written during the Tender Revolution. His music became a hymn of these events. However, as he says: »already ten days after the upheaval I knew that I should not enter politics« (Kouřil 2008).

Oleg Pastier today is an author of educational radio broadcasts and of a few books of interviews with famous representatives of Slovak culture. His attitude towards contemporary political life in Slovakia is entirely negative:

> A politician must have several stomachs. I have – so far – only one. And I guard it as one must guard one's eyes. Politics are barren, inhospitable, grumpy. Even the steadiest succumb over time to compromises and evasive lies in the political arena, and they often treat us, their voters, as a hard-to-tolerate bunch of inferior idiots. Is there anything appealing about it? (Pastier 2010)

Peter Kalmus expresses the same attitude – however, he continues to merge art and direct political protest. For example, last year he protested against a statue by a Communist sculptor in the centre of Bratislava by dressing in red (Krempaský 2010) and against the social politics of the government by dressing in prison clothes (TASR 2010).

Among the members of the ›dissident‹ part of Generation 52, perhaps the only person who remains visible in politics is Ján Budaj. However, he is obviously the exception that proves the rule, and his story shows clearly that although democratic ideals are still highly valued in at least some segments of the public sphere in Slovakia, on the level of decision-making the country has definitely entered the era of »postdemocracy« (Crouch 2004), when economic elites define the fate of states and politicians.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have found that all of those who experienced the trauma of 1968, even as children, remained influenced by it throughout their lives. Many of them were led by this experience to an independent, ›underground‹ existence at the beginning of ›normalisation‹. The ›gulp of freedom‹ that Czechoslovak society enjoyed in the second half of the sixties was enough to sustain these ›islands of positive deviation‹ until 1989. The Tender Revolution of 1989 became, in a certain sense, a fulfilment of the ›Western 1968‹ ideal of a peaceful revolution leading to the

emergence of a harmonious and democratic society. In the long run, however, the hopes for the emergence of such a society did not materialise. In Slovak public discourse the current government's policies is still from time to time compared with the ›normalisation‹ regime (Zajac 2008), but today there is no underground in the sense used here. There is no longer an external enemy and internal boundaries between ›friends‹ and ›foes‹ are also blurred.

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Nasze pokolenie – our generation

Self-image and generation-talk of the »young protest generation« of 1980s Poland[1]

Kirsten Gerland

Introduction

The collapse of communism can be analyzed from the perspective of generational dynamics. ›Generation‹ shaped the self-perception of different groups within the Polish opposition and affected how these phrased their respective ideas. Generation-specific visions of the future developed, emphasized by the self-generationalization of a »young protest-generation«. ›Generation‹ is often portrayed as an important feature of the history of Western Europe, illustrated by the long-standing tradition of German youth movements as well as the self-mobilization of the ›68ers‹ across Western Europe nearly twenty years after the student protests of 1968. But ›generation‹ also matters in East Central Europe, both as a category of self-understanding as well as an analytical approach within the social and historical sciences. During the early 1980s, a strong generational consciousness arose among young members of the Polish opposition who began to distinguish themselves from the founders of Solidarity and to talk about their »generational duty«. After the collapse of communism, a large segment of this self-declared »young generation« played an important role in the construction of the Third Republic, in particular the development of a new conservatism (Matyja 2009). Many former members of oppositional youth groups became part of the politi-

1 This article is based on my PhD-project at the graduate school on generational history at Georg-August University in Göttingen. I would like to thank all participants of the workshop »Generations of Change« that was held in November 2010 in Bielefeld for their comments.

cal elite or were influential in journalism. For these reasons, it is interesting to have a closer look at their stories and at their feelings of generational belonging ex post facto.

It seems to be a characteristic of youth movements with political goals to appeal to »a new bright future« to which they must contribute. These slogans and metaphors recur in the history of European youth movements (see for example Stambolis 2003; Nehring 2007). A key aspect in this regard is whether ›generation‹ reveals its ›magic‹. It can be ascertained that the oppositional Polish youth movements of the 1980s were drawn together by a strong generational consciousness and that former members still have a tendency to describe their biography in a generational matrix.

The groups and age-cohorts are too diverse to speak of a united youth generation. It is worthwhile to have a detailed look at the role of generational self-images to question its impact on the strategy to activate contemporaries for political action and on the creation of a strong group-consciousness. ›Generation‹, as I will argue, can be understood as a facet of self-consciousness and as a category to investigate processes of constructing collectivity. Further, whether generational feelings still exist or were lost reveals interesting questions concerning the emotional ties of youth groups and their internal dynamics. Henceforth I focus on feelings of generational belonging during the 1980s, as well as on biographical perspectives and narratives revealed in interviews since the end of communism.

My key argument focuses on generational consciousness and its potential shifts from the 1980s onwards. According to Ulrike Jureit, ›generations‹ are regarded as a category of identity, a phenomenon in political debates and also as an element of contemporary memory culture. First, a few remarks on generational theory are given to delineate the multiple dimensions of generation, the imprints on generational awareness as well as the concept of generational history used in my studies. Secondly, two youth groups active during the 1980s in Poland, *Ruch Młodej Polski* (RMP, Young Poland Movement) and *Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej* (FMW, Federation of Fighting Youth) are presented (for example Zaremba 2000;

Liczbarski 2005) in order to discuss the role played by self-generationalization during the 1980s as well as the way in which generational identity was created. Further, I will ask how generation-talk developed after 1989/1990. What role did these actors play as politicians and journalists in the creation of »the new Polish State« during the 1990s? Can they be described as a ›memory generation‹ (*Erinnerungsgeneration*) and have they been integrated in Polish memory culture? In all, I underline the fragility of generations as regards the formation of emotional ties and the meaning of generations as a »community of last resort« (Niethammer 2009).

Generational consciousness: a concept and its fragility

Generational consciousness and ›generations‹ in the sense of so-called generational units arise, according to Karl Mannheim, from a shared feeling of generational unity and an elite-group proclaiming a »generational cause« (Mannheim 1928). Therefore, generations have often been associated with political actors and their aim of revolutionary change. These reflections on generational phenomena were articulated by Mannheim at the beginning of the twentieth century and are still the most common frame of reference in studies dealing with generations and generational theory. But more generally, the term ›generation‹ opens a wide spectrum of associations and is not clearly defined. Generations are regarded in the meaning of ancestry, consumer or lifestyle-generations, as a phrase used in public debates or as an individual source of the formation of memory and identity (Silies et al. 2009). While generations have often been equated with age cohorts in social sciences (Ryder 1997), with regard to Karl Mannheim they have also been discussed as a small, male-dominated and elite group representing only a small part of their contemporaries. ›Generation‹ is slippery in meaning and a mutable approach, which has been used for different purposes such as kinship studies or analysis of age-cohorts (Burnett 2010: 1). Because it »sits between the objective, positivist world of cohort analysis, and the subjective, interpretivist world of life histories« (Burnett 2010: 42), it is an attractive, but complex concept. It combines a perspective on historical events or even soft behavioral changes on the one hand, and the open range of individual experiences on the other.

An often-discussed issue refers to the question whether a ›generational self-consciousness‹ has to exist to let us speak of a ›political generation‹. I believe that a self-understanding as and a feeling of belonging to a special generation is an essential criterion in order to prevent ›generations‹ from being invented by researchers. The so-called political generations should not be considered as givens, which appear in ›history‹ because of their ›social location‹, but rather as phenomena influenced by a complex process of identification and memory formation. Following this approach, the focus of the latest debates on generations has shifted to the process of generation-building and especially to the constructiveness of generation. Consequently it must be argued, as Bernd Weisbrod emphasizes, that »we should look in more detail into the ›politics of self-generalization‹ to deconstruct the ›generational fallacy‹« (Weisbrod 2007: 31).

In generational history, it has further been discussed whether a generation can emerge in state-socialist societies because of the lack of a democratic public. While some claim that the lack of intermediary structures prevented »generational units« from appearing in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) (Göschel 1999: 28), Rainer Gries has maintained that they were still possible (Gries 2006: 487). He makes a persuasive argument that even censorship and control of the media cannot completely suppress the inter-relations and communication which are needed to build up a generational consciousness. Nevertheless, the existence of a generation as a collectivity of shared feelings depends on its chances of homogenizing a variety of experiences. And these chances depend on the respective political system and on the media. A more detailed look is necessary regarding the impact of both on processes of generational self-understanding. Keeping in mind the *samizdat* press and the various networks of opposition movements in the GDR and the People's Republic of Poland in the 1980s, I suggest that a generational consciousness could have arisen via these spheres of communication even though it could not be crystallized via public media.

My suggestions are based on two main concepts of and ideas about generations. First, generations are regarded as a group of contemporaries communicating with each other about shared experiences and world-

views in their own group as well as beyond (Jureit 2006: 40). In this respect, I aim to show that ›generation‹ served as a political argument which helped not only to underline political ideas, but also to shape the self-perception of the »young protestors« and their style of debates and communication (Nehring 2007). Following the idea that ›consciousness‹ marks a key element in generational history, one should question how and when such emotions appear or even become crucial to a protest-movement.

Second, I will explore generations as ›memory generations‹ which create collectivity through the process of memory formation. By remembering their common generational imprints and talking about the specificity of ›their‹ generation, they form a generational community. It is not decisive that all of them experienced historical events and other imprints in the same way; more important is the construction or even invention of a generation by the actors themselves (Lottes 2005: 175).

A contemporary feeling of generational belonging can still have its relevance in constructing one's biography, for instance appearing in the form of a ›memory generation‹. This can be seen in the case of members of the 1960s student movements. A story of the ›generation of 1968‹ emerged in the 1980s, and this label is still crucial in self-descriptions and biographies of former actors as well as contemporaries. It expresses the open and mutable shape of a generation-label, instead of a precise definition of who can refer to it. It marks a cipher for everyone who experienced the time allowing them to connect their own lives to history (Schmidt: 2006). Finally, everybody can call themselves members of a generation as long as they at least share these invented collective »generational views and feelings« (Jureit 2006: 40). Individual memory, interpreted as an »associative construction« (Platt & Dabag: 1995), as well as the creation of one's own biography, are important features of generation-building. Successful generation-talk depends further on the media power of its actors and their chances of spreading their generational story and views in public. Following the latter concept of generation, I will argue that the influential role of the ›young generation‹ in creating

the Third Republic supported the appearance of a generational story and, afterwards, of a ›memory generation‹.

A generational phenomenon depends on self-images and memories as well as its interactions with public narratives and the chances to tell a ›generational story‹. Certainly, what can be remembered and what can be told in the respective society shapes a retrospective generational collectivity. Therefore, a ›generation‹ is unrepeatable – as Burnett notes – and has its own dynamics (Burnett 2010: 49). ›Generational belongings‹ are fragile, so that they themselves should be regarded in their historicity – shifting during time and space.

It is not sufficient to have a look at self-images, their shifts over time and biographical dimensions. The level of memory cultures should also be included. By this, ›generation‹ as a phenomenon of self-perception and collective self-understanding can be traced back to booms in memory cultures and ›emotional regimes‹.

Self-images. Oppositional youth movements active in the 1980s in the People's Republic of Poland

»Our generation is the one that will decide about the future Poland«, argued the youth movement *Niezależny Związek Młodzieży »Maksymilianie«* (Independent Association of Youth) in its declaration.[2] They spoke of the role of youth and aimed to mobilize other young people to protest against communist rule. This quote marks a prime example of young activists claiming political change and encouraging »the young generation« to join them. They not only address their contemporaries and point out young people's opposition to communism, but also invoke a shared generational consciousness. The young protest generation that emerged in the 1980s in Poland spoke intensively about the characteristics and duties of »their generation« (*nasze pokolenie*). Generation mattered as a political message and as a category of self-description.

2 Deklaracja Niezależnego Związku Młodzieży »Maksymilianie«, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/100.

The age-cohorts of its members were too diverse to call them a youth-generation in reference to the statistics. And they should not be associated with a unified movement, because they had various political backgrounds; their generational community sprung from a feeling they shared. Consequently, it should be questioned to what extent ›generation‹ affected their self-reflection.

Following this line of thought, it is interesting to examine whether ›generation‹ merely offers a political argument, or also an overarching concept for describing the self and creating a protest-community.

Many youth groups founded in the late 1970s and in the 1980s aimed to »fight for Poland's independence«. They had different political orientations, but all shared the same vision: a strong opposition by the ›young generation‹. To achieve independence, they tried to raise political awareness among young people and to construct an independent youth movement such as the Warsaw group *Ruch Młodzieży Demokratycznej Wolność* founded in 1985 or *Młodzieżowy Ruch Oporu Solidarność* in Wroclaw. The independent student movement *Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów* (NZS) and the environmental peace movement *Wolność i Pokój* (WiP) are examples of movements which were active throughout the country. Groups existed with a strong generational consciousness that held lively discussion about their generational imprints, such as FMW.

This shows that for some youth groups the reference to, and identification as a ›generation‹ provided a powerful emotional link to the movement. In contrast, the independent student movement NZS and environmental peace movement WiP neither spoke of themselves as belonging to a generation nor interpreted their political programme as a ›generational duty‹. I will subsequently argue, that ›generation‹ had a different meaning to these various groups and partly became a symbol of the movement.

A self-generationalization and generational consciousness is – regarding groups of widespread appearance – most clearly reflected in articulations by the RMP and FMW. Moreover, archival resources and newspaper

articles from the 1980s allow a long-term perspective from the late 1970s onwards.

The RMP was founded in Gdansk in 1979 by a circle of young pupils who published the unofficial newspaper *Bratniak*. Its members included, among others, Jacek Bartyzel, Grzegorz Grzelak and Aleksander Hall. The founders of RMP were mostly born around 1953. Their successors, the so-called ›second generation‹, were born nearly ten years later (Marulewska 2009: 150). The younger members had their own leaders, such as Kazimierz Michał Ujazdowski and the 2010 Polish presidential candidate Marek Jurek. Founded in Gdansk, they soon spread to different cities including Warsaw, Cracow and Poznań.

In their *Deklaracja Ideowa* (Declaration of Ideas), the members of RMP summarized their political views and goals.[3] Their political aims consisted mainly of the struggle for an independent nation and civil rights. In the *Deklaracja Ideowa*, members emphasize that they aspire to prepare the ›young generation‹ to defend Polish society, the national culture and to gain free access to media.[4] Similar aims were declared by the FMW in 1985: to mobilize the ›young generation‹ for the fight for Polish independence.[5] While the RMP discussed a new conservative movement in their newspapers, the FMW had a connection to the anarchist group *Ruch Społeczenstwa Alternatywnego* (RSA, Alternative Society Movement). In its newspapers like *BMW* (*Biuletyn Młodzieży Walczącej*, Newsletter of the Fighting Youth) or *Monit* (Reminder), the FMW discussed, for instance, the cruelties of Stalinism, the education in schools, Poland's road to independence as well as the actual situation of young people, the so-called lost generation in the People's Republic of Poland.[6]

3 Deklaracja Ideowa RMP, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/6 and AO IV/130.

4 Deklaracja Ideowa RMP, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/6.

5 See for example *Monit* No. 67 (1988), p. 1.

6 See for example *Monit* No. 69 (December 1988), p. 1; *Monit* No. 67 (November 1988), p. 1; *Monit* (June 1989), p. 1, Archiwum FMW, Gdansk.

The FMW was founded in 1984 by pupils protesting for, among other aims, more self-determination and less indoctrination in the educational system. Its members, like those of RSA and *Wolność i Pokój* (WiP, Freedom and Peace), became active after the proclamation of martial law in 1981 and were several years younger than the founders of RMP. FMW groups appeared in various cities and were most active in Gdansk, Warsaw, Cracow and Wroclaw (Liczbarski 2005: 138).

›Generation‹ was a meaningful category for describing their identity and the character of their group. Talk of generational experiences and differences can therefore transport the motives and passions that drive a protest movement, as Holger Nehring has shown for student movements in the 1960s in Western Europe. So how did they characterize their generation and construct a collectivity?

In many documents, the actors of RMP and FMW communicated with each other about the character of ›their generation‹ and about common generational imprints. Speaking of themselves as the »generation which was born and raised in the Peoples Republic«,[7] the members of RMP regarded two historical events as crucial to their childhood experience: the »Carnival of Solidarity« and the period of »Martial Law«. Aleksander Hall for example, a member of RMP, mentioned the importance of the August strikes of 1980 in an article in the newspaper *Bratniak*.[8] These two historical experiences became the main sources of a constructed generational unity. They created a base of common experiences and feelings which bound members together. Their ›generation-talk‹ also advanced to a ›founding myth‹ of their oppositional movement.

Comparable to the members of RMP, the actors of FMW spoke of themselves in the 1980s as the ›young generation‹ growing up during the cruel times of martial law. They emphasized that they could not forget the tanks on the streets, as a FMP pamphlet typically iterates: »Representing the young generation that grew up in these cruel times and re-

7 Deklaracja Ideowa RMP, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/6.

8 Aleksander Hall: Artykuł dyskusyjny. *Bratniak* No. 26, p. 5, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO V/85.

members the tear gas and tanks on the streets, we cannot forget.[9] Furthermore, they described themselves in contemporary documents as a generation with no alternatives, and as a »lost generation«.[10]

A community of young protesters was constructed which stuck together not only by talking about common experiences, but also by distinguishing themselves from the older generation. Members of RMP and FMW differentiated themselves from older dissidents, whom they characterized as the »solidarity generation«. By questioning the appearance of a generational conflict they discussed the generational differences between the ›old‹ members of the opposition and the ›youngsters‹. An edition of the *Federacyjny Biuletyn Informacyjny* (FBI, Newsletter of the Federation) for example, a newspaper put out by FMW in Cracow, deals with the different cultural styles represented by the ›older‹ and ›younger‹ members of oppositional movements.[11]

The ›youth groups‹ supported *Solidarność*, but they wanted to create their own movement. They felt a difference between the ›old‹ and the ›young‹ members of the opposition and talked about their specificity: their changeable character, a potential for adaptation as well as bias towards innovation. For example Krzysztof Grzelczyk, a member of RMP, mentioned in *Bratniak* that this characteristic was due to circumstance, that they are still searching for their »place in life« and their own tradition of oppositional activity.[12] To be ›young‹ and oppositional meant being focused on future perspectives. Partly, they emphasized their difference from the older members of the opposition by describing themselves as non-co-

9 »Reprezentując młode pokolenie wyrosłe w tych strasznych czasach, doskonale pamietajace czolgi i gazy na ulicach, nie możemy zapomnić.« FMP: Ulotka wydana w osma rodnice wprowadzenia stanu wojennego, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/ 31.1.

10 *Monit* No. 82-83 (1989), p. 2; *Monit* No. 67 (1988), Archiwum FMW, Gdansk.

11 *FBI* No. 8/9 (20.5.1989), p. 3, Archiwum FMW, Gdansk.

12 Krzysztof Grzelczyk: Nasze miejsce w opozycji, *Bratniak* No. 14, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO V/85.

operative and more radical regarding talks and agreements with the Communist Party (cf. Błaszkiewicz et al. 1994: 134).

Like other youth movements in the twentieth century, these groups were based on the idea of youth as a force which can drive political change. The myth of youth, the belief that youth can spread revolutionary power, played an important role in their self-portrayal as well as in their political thinking. They often spoke of representing the ›young generation‹, which has the duty of resistance and political influence: »As young people we must wake society from their lethargy«.[13] And members of RMP declared, »we have to take our share of responsibility for the future Poland«.[14] Therefore, they interpreted belonging to the ›young generation‹ as a duty to achieve political change and determine the future Poland. This is also expressed by stating that the future depends on youth: »It is mostly the young people on which the future will depend on«.[15] Referring to the »power of youth«, they tried to gain influence and underlined their purpose as a »political voice«. Youth was estimated to play an important role in society and for the future of Poland. Moreover, the ›young generation‹ embodied the hope of a new, free country. To speak of another ›young generation‹ of protest – an image which goes back to Adam Mickiewicz (Henze 2008: 257) – was meaningful in order to connect to the tradition and history of Polish opposition against foreign influence.

›Generation‹ not only affected the self-images of oppositional movements or mattered as a political argument in the sense that its members referred to the ›duty of the young‹ to influence the future. Furthermore, the future of the ›communist project‹ and the development of society

13 »[…] jako mlodżi ludzie, obudźmy nasze społeczenstwo z letargu!« FMW: Ulotka wydana w osma rodnice wprowadzenia stanu wojennego, Archiwum Opozycji- Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/ 31.1.

14 »Musimy […] przejąc naszą część odpowiedzialności za przeszlą Polskę.« Deklaracja Ideowa RMP, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO IV/6.

15 »I to przede wszystkim ludziom młodym od których to głównie załeżec będzie przysłość nas wszystkych.« *Bratniak* No. 14 (1978), p. 23, Archiwum Opozycji-Karta, Warsaw, AO V/8.

itself was discussed within a generational framework. From the beginning of the construction of communism in Poland as well as in the GDR, the communist rulers emphasized how important the support of the ›young generation‹ was to fulfill this task of a ›new society‹. »The future depends on youth« was a slogan which appeared repeatedly in the speeches and documents of the Communist Party and its youth functionaries (see for example Mc Dougall 2004: 1). Within communist society, ›youth‹ had the task of engaging actively in the ›communist programme‹ and carrying on the historical vision of the ›founding fathers‹. But ›youth‹ could not completely be shaped by the state, as can be seen by the emphasis youth groups placed on speaking for themselves and creating their own space by breaking away from the party or from communist youth organizations.

Youth-debates resemble the future perspectives of a society as Valeska Henze argues (Henze 2008: 255). If it has been interpreted as a potential for historical change, even as a social redemption or a threat to the society, ›youth‹ had various connotations since it was accepted as an independent phase of life in the nineteenth century (see for example Passerini 1997: 375; Mitterauer 1986; Speitkamp 1998). In state-socialist societies, youth was overloaded with the mission of creating ›a new socialist society‹. For communists as well as for youth groups, the future seemed closely tied to the question of youth. But the youth activists had different goals in mind. Instead of guaranteeing the development of socialism – as the communist rulers proclaimed – they interpreted ›youth‹ as a main force for achieving radical political and social change. In this way the independent youth-groups referred to this bias towards future and youth, but gave it a revolutionary touch.

Dealing with these youth groups inevitably raises the question of their impact on the end of communism. By publishing newspapers, remembering parts of Polish history and creating a sphere of free discussion within their groups, they shaped an alternative world that deviated from the socialist model. They contributed to a new rising hope of overcoming communist rule. The ›young generation‹ can be interpreted as an important force that mobilized the protests during the 1980s. By creating a

new culture of protest, organizing happenings and representing a new lifestyle, they mark a turning point in the history of Polish opposition against communist rule (Marciniak 2002: 35). Acting in groups such as FMW, WiP or *Pomarańczowa Alternatywa* (Orange Alternative) they discussed various topics such as freedom, environmentalism and a new political agenda.

In some of these groups ›generation‹ served to underline their group-identity as well as their political programme. Looking at history, this is an exception rather than a rule. This underscores that generations are »cultural constructs and usually come in particular kinds and times and for particular purposes of self-promotion« (Weisbrod 2007: 20).

›Generation‹ as a self-image was probably most striking for those groups who were able to connect their ideas and aims to the Polish tradition of young opponents fighting for Polish independence. By speaking of a »young protest generation«, they could refer to the long history of Polish opposition against foreign rule, but also to the revolutionary future. In this sense did their self-image fit well to the widespread interpretation of such a ›generation‹ as a symbol of a ›young hero‹. In the case of fighting for environmentalism or underlining the importance of environmental consciousness, ›generation‹ might not have transported the appropriate message. This shows the fragility of ›generation‹ as a form of constructing the self and creating the identity of a political movement.

As argued above with regard to the members of RMP and FMW, they not only used generational arguments but also identified themselves as a generation, even up to today.

Memories and narratives. Generation-talk of former members

Generational consciousness and self-image change over time. They can disappear, be reinvented or remain a part of a self-portrayal. They possess the potential to become a widespread label to describe one's sense of belonging. In its biographical dimension ›generation‹ can give orientation in tracing back one's life to history and subscribing oneself to a community of people who supposedly had the same experiences.

Do these actors still describe themselves as a generation or talk of a »generational burden«? Members of the youth movements in Poland who were active during the 1980s still share a feeling of belonging to a generation and talk about their »generational character«. Therefore it is interesting to analyze their narratives and memories after the fall of communism, as well as their role during the period of transformation.

Several years after the fall of communism in Poland, Władislaw Wałendziak, a former member of an independent youth movement, in 1997 described the characteristics of his contemporaries in an interview with the magazine *Fronda*: »It is the generation […], named Pampersi, who were constructing the political culture in which we are living now« (Wałendziak 1997: 334). By this, he emphasized the importance of ›his‹ ›young generation‹, active in the 1980s in independent youth movements against communist rule and in the construction of the Third Republic of Poland.

Many former members of these youth groups acted in media or made a career as politicians, like Aleksander Hall or Arkadiusz Rybicki, who are both former leaders of RMP. Another expression of their influential role can be seen in the example of the group Pampersi. During the 1990s a group of young conservatives, the so-called Pampersi, gained influence in the media and tried to promote their colleagues to high political positions. After Wiesław Wałendziak became chairman of TV Polska, he gathered many young journalists with similar worldviews around him. In *Fronda* and other publications, many former members of RMP initiated a debate about the new conservatism in Poland. Actually, they continuated a debate that already played a role in their political thinking during the 1980s. After their most well-known TV shows folded, they were portrayed as a generational phenomenon whose time had already passed (Zdort 2002).

The term ›Pampersi‹ is moreover a good example for the ambivalent meaning of a generation-label, changing from an offending term to a popular self-image. Pampersi was used by older journalists trying to discredit their emphasis and influence in media – but it ended up backfiring. The youngsters to soon started to accept this label and used it in their descriptions of ›their‹ generation. It most likely developed into a wide-

spread self-image so quickly because it marks a self-ironic, but also concise and vivid story of their successful journey through life: seizing power at a young age. Revolting against communist rule in the 1980s, most of the members of this group were in their late twenties or in their thirties and influential in constructing the Third Republic of Poland in the 1990s. They were proud enough of what they achieved that they could easily shun the insulting meaning of the term Pampersi.

It is not by accident that the boom of this generation-label occurred in the 1990s. It became a symbol of those young members of the opposition who were staking their claims in the transformation period. They were a small group with access to the media, so they were able to spread their political ideas and their generation-talk. They were joined together by a political programme, the new conservatism, which kept awake their generational story.

Although different approaches existed in how the shift to the Third Republic and their structure – as a part of *Solidarność* or in the form of an own party – should look like, they were still united in their memories as representing a ›successful generation‹. These actors, whether they describe themselves concretely as Pampersi being connected with a programme of a new conservatism in Media or more general as *Młodopolacy* (Young Poland Movement) – another prevalent generation-label – still harbor a strong feeling of belonging to this generation.

Further, they nowadays regard their activism in RMP as an important phase in their lives, so that it is interpreted as a biographical experience. In retrospectives, they often trace their life story back to these times, calling them crucial to their future. In the perspective of Jarosław Sellin, for example, it has been »a political, moral and intellectual adventure« and besides that a »good school for citizens' action« (Marulewska 2009: 153). Comparably, Maciej Grzywaczewski notices in retrospect that engaging in RMP was an »important phase of my life, which shaped my social consciousness« (ibid.: 145).

›Generation‹ still provides a code which allows them to express their ›self-image‹ as well as their political message. It seems as if their generational image is still very clear. To this day, pursuing a political goal and remembering their ›youth‹ strengthens their generational contours and allows them to stick together emotionally.

The ›generation-talk‹ was crystallized in the debate about the Pampersi. This label was spread via the media, evoked interests of the public and marked a political vision. It became so popular because it explained the career of young journalists but was also used by actors themselves to underline their conservative project. But a boom of a generation-label cannot itself create a generation. Beyond this, the generational consciousness is latent in self-portrayals and can be interpreted as a persistent potentiality to characterize the ›self‹. In this sense, generation is deeply rooted in »doing biography« (Fetz 2009: 37). Independent of its ›performance‹, if it is transmitted by a political agenda, becomes public by a ›media-boom‹ or is simply common in shared narratives, it is meaningful unless it loses its ›biographical relevance‹.

Members of FMW also feel they belong to a generation ex post facto and discuss their lives in a generational matrix. Although their generational consciousness, as former member Mariusz A. Roman explains, seems to become blurred.[16] He notes that many of his former colleagues do not actively refer back to these times. He talks of those who, now around forty years old, experienced the 1980s strikes and martial law as children or young adolescents. He speaks about his engagement in FMW and names his contemporaries the »generation of 1988«, remembering their activism in the protests and strikes. In his memories, it was the ›young‹ and not the ›old‹ who were most active during the 1988 strikes.[17] This image of the »young, brave revolutionaries« already prevailed in self-portrayals during the 1980s. It seems that their generational nostalgia

16 See the memories of Mariusz A. Roman on the website of FMW: http://www.fmw.org.pl/index.php?option=18&action=articles_show&art_id=557&menu_id=732&page=291.

17 Ibid.

is still virulent up to today. An example of this attachment to preserving their own history are the archival projects and the collections of remembrances of former actors. On the website of FMW we can find many photos and stories about these times collected by the actors themselves.[18] Jacek Górski, for instance, has written down his life story, describing his activism in the FMW. It is striking that these actors are aware of their history and try to transmit it to the next generations.

In their narratives, members of RMP and FMW refer to their anti-communist actions. They emphasize their importance within the opposition during the 1980s in Poland. By sharing their memories and talking about them in public, they are still drawn together and emotionally linked to the former collective.

Crucial to the appearance of a ›memory generation‹ is not only its relevance regarding biographical constructions, but also the interrelations with memories and interests of the public. The young Polish activists who joined independent youth movements during the 1980s are well-known in public and have been integrated in the memory culture of 1989, even though they complain about ›staying in the shadow‹ of the older members of *Solidarność*.

This reveals the historiography of the fall of communism in Poland, in which these young actors are mentioned as an important part of the oppositional movement (Machcewicz 2002). To date, several monographs have been published dealing with these movements, such as Wojciech Polak's examination of the NZS (Polak 2001) and Tomasz Sikorski's book on the history of RMP (Sikorski 2011). Further, they have been discussed in the long perspective of ›youth opposition‹ since 1945 (Sudziński 2005; Seranka/Stępień 2009).

This can also be seen in the press coverage of the end of communism in Poland. For example in September 2009, the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of RMP, several newspapers reported on the youth movement, including *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* (Katka 2009; Wybranowski

18 See the website of FMW: http://www.fmw.org.pl/.

& Kubiak 2009). Regarding the question of why these »youngsters« have remained in public memory, Bogusław Chrabota, in an article published in *Newsweek*, suggests that they represent »a symbol of the young and intellectual Poland joining the workers in the fight for freedom« (Chrabota 2009).

And they themselves contribute to the remembrance of the youth groups. Talking of the »youngest dissidents« of the Polish Republic, Jacek Górski for example, himself a former member of the FMW, referred back to the history of this group (Górski 2009: 6).

Concerning the ›memory generation‹, the narrative of belonging to this generation still, in contrast to young East Germans, has its effect on political discourse as well as on biographical stories. Former actors of these youth groups such as RMP not only engage in political debates, but also emphasize that it was ›their generation‹ that influenced the new conservatism or the new political culture in Poland.

In a nutshell, members of RMP and FMW are aware of their own history. By dealing with the past, creating archival platforms or continuing political debates of the 1980s, they recall and homogenize their experiences. Former members regard their political activism as an important phase of their life, so that ›generational belonging‹ is one way in which they make sense of their own biographies. A generational story is made possible by the formation of individual memories, but also by the interchange of memories and the creation of collective awareness. But also the fact of having media power, being known in public and the interest with which they were observed in the 1990s allows them to tell and spread their generation-story.

Furthermore, their story of a generation of youth fighting against communist rule fits well into Polish memory culture and is a useful means of collective self-understanding. National identity is focused on the memorization of various oppositional movements and the long-standing domination by foreign rule, as Krzysztof Ruchniewicz has pointed out (Ruchniewicz 2005: 18). The history of opposition is therefore a main part within history and national identity (Ruchniewicz 2005). That enables

them to interpret their action in terms of keeping a tradition of national resistance.

Resumee

The young protest generation acting during the 1980s in Poland possessed a strong generational consciousness. ›Generation‹ not only influenced their group identity as well as their political argumentation, but also appeared in their biographical narrations afterwards. Finally, their understanding of themselves as a generation and their generation-talk has been integrated into the culture of memory regarding the fall of communism in Poland. Based on individual memory and memory formation, they have formed a group drawn together by a strong feeling of ›generational unity‹. By communicating with each other about their generational imprints and being acknowledged by the public, they became a part of the ›collective memory‹. During the 1990s, a part of these actors debated about the new conservatism in the Third Republic and were influential as politicians and journalists, supporting their story of a »victorious generation«. In this respect, they can be described as a self-appointed political generation that has created ›generational unity‹ and successfully continued its generation-talk after 1989.

It must still be examined whether we are faced with the last emphatically ›political generation‹ in Poland. After the appearance of this self-declared ›youth generation‹ protesting against communist rule, we can hardly find a comparable self-image or proclaimed generational project. Since the 1990s, several generational labels have appeared in the media – such as ›Generation X‹ (*generacja X*) and the generation of Johannes Paul II (*pokolenie JP2*) – but never again was a strong generational consciousness claimed by young people themselves and connected to a political programme. In times of radical historical changes, generational projects are more likely to be a part of self-identities and play a role in the creation of a collective. So we have to ask whether ›generation‹ has perhaps lost its emotional attachment as a powerful self-description of a political movement and has instead been replaced by »media and lifestyle generations« (Zinnecker 2003: 54).

To date, the focus of generational history and theory has been on western European protest movements, particularly youth movements; but we can find a strong emotional attachment to ›generation‹ as a political argument and as a self-image in state-socialist societies as well. In Poland, Hungary and East Germany for example, a youthful upheaval developed during the final crisis of communism. In Hungary, a political group referred to its generational character and transferred its activism to a political party, *Fidesz* (Dalos 2009: 78), which later became part of the political system. In East Germany as well, a youth movement appeared in the late 1980s that possessed an image of itself as a ›new generation‹ that must follow a historical duty. In contrary, they later mostly joined their West German partners. Finally, the movements in these countries had different chances of maintaining their organizational structures and prolonging their emotional community after 1989/1990. Generational rhetoric and self-portraits have to be studied in more detail in former state-socialist societies.

Interestingly, ›generation‹ appeared as a political argument within independent youth groups in other countries besides Poland – such as the GDR and Hungary – but had a different outcome in terms of its role in emotional and biographical binding. ›Generation‹ helped to form a strong emotional attachment to the Polish movements and was used to subscribe the individual into history as well as to characterize the self. Even today the generational matrix is in parts an appropriate figure for describing one's identity or for underlining a political message. The potentials and factors enabling a generation are shifting over time, so that a long-term observation of ›generational feelings‹ can contribute to an explanation of why they appear or why they might remain part of the silent knowledge of sharing age-related experiences.

Future researches on generational history will have to deal more intensively with comparative or transnational, as well as biographical and intergenerational, perspectives. Within a transnational view on generational phenomena a discussion might well be fruitful on the extent to which national traditions of collectivity and emotional styles have an impact on processes of generation building. Finally, analyses of biographical narra-

tions (see for example Fietze 2009: 135) as well as intergenerational relationship have to be connected with a generational history perspective. Such projects would contribute to a detailed examination of the imagination and creation of generational belongings.

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Biographical constructions of generationality and inter-generationality in processes of au-pair migration

Caterina Rohde

Introduction

> There was happiness and sorrow at the same time, because she was happy that I will perhaps have better chances and that my life somehow will work out differently. That my life will be different than hers maybe. But she was also sad that I was going to leave.
>
> *Olga, au-pair immigrant, 26 years old*

In recounting their life stories, people, as in this case »Olga«, also tell the story of their family, their generation and their country. Analysing the biographical data for my ongoing study on au-pair migration[1] from Russia to Germany, it soon became apparent that many of my interview partners made use of similar explanatory patterns for their ›biographical acting‹.[2] Often they referred to the broader context of their decision to migrate, described transitional events in their childhood and youth, and expressed their desire to experience an environment different from that of their home country. More surprisingly, many of my interviewees not

1 Under the German au-pair scheme, young foreigners may work in a local family assisting with babysitting and light household chores for a maximum of twelve months. Au-pair migration refers to au-pair workers' settlement in the host country after the au-pair phase.

2 I define ›biographical acting‹ as an individuals' effort to gain control over the progression of his or her life. It may be guided by their orientations as regards life planning or may disagree with them if their current living conditions so require.

only named international mobility as their personal opportunity to better chances of their biographical acting, but often pointed to their parents' support for this project.

Applying a generational perspective to my empirical data my guiding question is: Do collective experiences during socialisation have a similar influence on the current biographical acting of au-pair migrants? Furthermore, I am interested in whether the interviewees' parents' experiences of the transition in Russia affected their attitudes towards their children's international mobility. Possibly, immigration after au-pair mobility was not the sole decision of my interview partners, but rather an inter-generational life project in accordance with their parents' wishes.

This investigation is confronted with the task of unravelling the interplay between social generations and the dynamics of familial generations within individual life stories. As Olga's statement illustrates, biographical constructions may involve both one's own experiences within society as well as parental experiences that are transmitted through values, norms and expectations within the family. After a short introduction of theoretical approaches to this phenomenon, developed by Karl Mannheim and others, a review of the literature on generational experiences of Russian women in socialist and post-socialist times sets the context for individual cases of au-pair migration. I then turn to my own empirical data and present three case studies[3] of au-pair mobility and au-pair migration. I analyse these interviews as regards biographical constructions of childhood and socialisation in youth. Furthermore, I aim to investigate the relationship between my target group and their parents as reflected in the biographies. This investigation provides insight into how the two different generations within one family evaluate Russia's past, and into their respective assessment of the younger generation's chances and opportunities with regard to their current life planning.

3 The empirical data was collected using biographical narrative interviews as developed by Schütze and analysed using a combination of ›objective hermeneutics‹ as defined by Oevermann and ›narration analysis‹ following Schütze. Due to limited space, I cannot discuss my methodological approach in this article.

An investigation of cases of au-pair migration applying the theoretical and methodological approach of biographical research assumes that collective and individual turning points foster biographical reflections about the juxtaposition of the individual and the social (Temkina & Zdravomyslova 2004: 80; see also Humphrey et al. 2003). The au-pair migrants studied not only experienced Russia's transition as such a turning point. Their immigration to another country also required biographical processes of maintaining and constructing the self within changing circumstances. On the basis of three empirical case studies, I conclude this article with a short discussion of the applicability and compatibility of a generational approach to and with biographical studies. The epistemological potential of a generational perspective arises from its focus on collective experiences that set the context for each individual's life, such as Russia's transition. Nevertheless, it is an open question whether this approach, while making generalizable patterns of experience visible might not at the same time obstruct the researcher's perception of those cohort members who, because of different experiences, do not belong to their generation.

The interplay of social generations and familial generations

Biographies of young Russian women who have been working as au-pairs in Germany may be approached from a biographical and/or a generational perspective. In a nutshell, biographical research focuses on revealing an individual's attributions of meaning or sense (*Sinnzuweisungen*) and action orientations (*Handlungsorientierungen*) based on his or her life experiences (see for example Rosenthal 2008; Farrokhzad 2007; Küver 2008). Nevertheless, this approach also recognizes that biographies are shaped by the social and not only constructed by an isolated and independent individual. Oechsle and Geissler for example hint at the linkage of individual lives. The authors argue that women in particular tend to orient their life planning to that of partners or parents, negotiating their own aims and desires with those of the »important other« (Geissler & Oechsle 2001).

In contrast to retracing the construction of biographies and its relation to individual experiences, the generational approach focuses on collective experiences within specific socio-historical frames. The use of the generational approach in analyses of social phenomena reaches back to Karl Mannheim. In his article *Das Problem der Generationen*, first published in 1928,[4] Mannheim introduces the fundamental distinction between »cohort« and »generation«. Generation is understood by Mannheim not as a social group unified by the same year of birth. Rather a generation is determined by the time of birth because it sets an individual into a specific socio-historical space, thus shaping his or her socialisation. Members of one generational location experience historical events at the same time in their lives. Being a member of one generation, and not only one cohort, in this sense implies that an individual's consciousness is affected by his or her generational location within a historical space. As Kohli elaborates, to form a generation, individuals must also live in a common society and thus share a common social space of experience (*sozialer Erfahrungsraum*) (Kohli 2009).

According to Pilcher, Mannheim's work reflects differences in the quality of generational formations depending on specific socio-historical contexts (Pilcher 1994). Mannheim argues clearly that not every generation exhibits a distinctive generational consciousness. Generational boundaries may be blurred due to processes of the transmission of interpretations, norms and practices from one generation to the other, and by the concurrent processes of transformation. Nevertheless, in changing social and historical contexts, transmitted cultural knowledge can be challenged and may be modified (Mannheim 1970). Whether distinctive generations emerge is very much dependent on the tempo of change. Accelerated social change is, according to Mannheim, initiated by a disruption of normalcy. The usual cycle of older generations dying and younger generations maturing may be cut off by accelerated social and cultural change.[5] This results in a situation in which individuals need to change

4 In 1952, an English translation of Mannheim's article was published entitled *The problem of generations*.

5 I assume that the fall of the Soviet Union qualifies as such an event.

their »basic attitudes« (Pilcher 1994 following Mannheim 1952) more quickly than within the continuous change of the normal succession of generations.

In a human lifespan, youth and young adulthood is the phase with the largest potential to form the generational location of individuals (Becker 1989: 77). Struck et al. define this formative period as the years between 15 and 30. Personal experience of life's opportunities and risks can have a greater influence on young generations than the norms and traditions passed down to them from older generations. This leads to the emergence of new forms of behaviour that oppose transmitted traditions (Struck et al. 1998). Struck et al. define »generation« in accordance with Becker (1989) and Sackmann and Weymann (1994) as a cohort that shows a distinctive structure of opportunities and risks and is anchored in a process of social change. Generations can therefore be recognized in that they share a common destiny (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*; Struck et al. 1998: 8).

Regarding the use of the generational approach in empirical studies, Kohli points out two main problems which endanger the analytical power of this approach. First, social generations are seldom clear-cut and therefore it is often difficult to identify distinct historical generations. Nevertheless, Kohli, in reference to the German context, explains that there are some historical markers which function as indicators for generational formation such as the transition to the First World War, the end of the Second World War and the year 1968. According to Kohli, the year 1989 might be another historical event with a similar influence on generational change, but it must be analysed more carefully as to the ways in which different cohorts and social milieus were affected (Kohli 2009).

The second problem regarding the analysis of generations stems from the intersection of generation with other categories of social differentiation such as class, gender and ethnicity. For Kohli, it is crucial to be aware that these categories of differentiation are not independent of each other, but rather intersect. This may result in their mutual neutralisation or reinforcement (Kohli 2009). Accordingly, Struck at al. suggest that

generations are segmented depending on the economic, socio-cultural, gender specific and particular location of individuals. The more segmented one generation is, the less clearly and distinctively it appears to the researcher (Struck et al. 1998).

The generational approach is based on understanding individual lives as linked to each other. This linkage may be between individuals of one generation (*Generationsgenossen*; Kohli 2009: 239) or between individuals belonging to different generations within one family. The latter shall be defined, following Pilcher (1994), as familial generations, denoting kinship and the succession of parents and children. Relationships between different generations within the family are culturally constructed. In spite of socio-historical variations, it is typically during youth and young adulthood that children gradually attain autonomy from their parents. While maturing young people become financially independent by entering into the employment market, moving out of their parents' house and starting a ›serious‹ relationship or even their own family. Within this process, young people have to negotiate between their parents' expectations and hopes and their own preferences (Geissler & Oechsle 1996). Consequently, the transformation from child to adult also leads to a reconfiguration of family roles, and the relationship between parents and children becomes more egalitarian over the course of time (Graf et al. 2000).

For the purpose of the article at hand it is crucial that individuals belong simultaneously to a social generation and a familial generation and that there is a mutual interaction of both types of generation. I investigate whether the act of au-pair migration marks the emergence of a distinctive post-socialist generation and its specific practices. I am further interested in whether and how the parents, who belong to Russia's socialist generation, influence their children's biographical acting. In this way au-pair migration may become an inter-generational project involving two different social generations as well as familial generations.

The context of au-pair migration: Generationality among Russian women in socialist and post-socialist times

The research literature[6] on Russian women was for the most part written after important developments in Russian social sciences beginning in the 1990s, during which gender studies and biographical research emerged as parallel foci (Temkina & Zdravomyslova 2004). One of the most prominent arguments in this field is that although Russian women participated equally in the labour market during Soviet times, gender relations were still characterized by a specific form of inequality between women and men. Article 35 of the Soviet constitution defined men and women as equal and thereby granted universal access to education and work. Article 60 obligated all Soviet citizens to work in the productive sphere of the Union (Pilkington 1992). Along with these obligations women had ›demographic duties‹ as mothers and housewives. Unlike men, women were engaged in the productive and reproductive sphere of Soviet society. This is mirrored in the image of the ›working mother‹ (Ashwin & Lytkina 2004). Although in the West equal access to work is praised as the emancipation of women, many gender studies researchers instead regard the situation of Soviet women as twofold oppression (Ashwin & Lytkina 2004; Goodwin & Emelyanova 1995; Temkina & Zdravomyslova 2003; Pilkington 1992).

In spite of their high educational levels women were concentrated in the so-called non-productive industries, such as health care and education, communication and service and textile production (Pilkington 1992). Their wages were lower (Ashwin & Lytkina 2004) and they were seldom promoted to better jobs, let alone top management positions (Pilkington 1992).

6 Due to the limited space of this article, only a broad overview of the generationality of Russian women can be given. This issue must be elaborated elsewhere.

As the Soviet era progressed, the role of women became more and more important in the private sphere of the families and the semi-private sphere of social networks and the black market. Especially in the Brezhnev era,[7] some goods became rare on the Soviet market and could only be gotten via private contacts and networks, in which women were much more embedded than were men (Pilkington 1992). These changing gender relations were criticized in public discourse when General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev[8] stated that female emancipation had resulted in a loss of morality among Soviet youth, as women do not have enough time to care for their families (Pilkington 1992). Although to this day their formal equality has not been questioned, women have had to face political and medial discourse demanding their return to more ›traditional‹ roles as mothers and housewives (Pilkington 1992; Goodwin & Emelyanova 1995).[9]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, after different political and economic reforms known as *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* and after the privatization of national property and the liberalisation of prices in 1992, caused a massive economic crisis including hyperinflation, unemployment and constant political instability. During this time of transition, Russia's population experienced material deprivation and a decline of living standard as well as uncertainty about the stability and the future of their country (Bridger & Kay 1996). Since prices rose, the black market remained important for the survival of families during this period.

Families and social networks, held together by women in particular, remained crucial to securing a livelihood. As Shlapentokh and Marchenko put it, transition meant that for »most Russians, physical survival is the

7 Leonid Ilyich Breshnev was General Secretary of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982.

8 Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 until 1991.

9 According to Goodwin and Emelyanova, the government aimed to pressure women out of full-time jobs in order to increase the male employment rate, cf. Goodwin & Emelyanova 1995: 338.

major goal and the solidarity of the family is their greatest resource« (Shlapentokh & Marchenko 1992: 43-44).

The position of women in transitioning Russian society was twofold. Women carried the burden of transition by becoming the family's main actor in the management of daily life with a diminishing budget. Especially after the crisis of August 1998, when wages and employment rates decreased, many families began to look for alternative means of earning money alongside or instead of formal work. It was grandmothers and mothers who started to sell self-made textiles or vegetables and fruits grown in the family dacha (summer house).

Women not only bore the burden of social change, they also represented its losers: They became more and more excluded from the public sphere of Russian society due to discrimination within the political and economic system (Shlapentokh 2003).

The new market did not change career inequality between men and women, but rather reinforced it. Especially for women over 35, it was difficult to find employment in the male-dominated new market. Younger women soon became concentrated in secretarial and assistant positions for which they were extremely overqualified. The newly developing economy was riddled with sexism and chauvinism, resulting in a discourse that perceived women »only as decorative appendages to male ›professionals‹« (Bridger & Kay 1996: 30).

Within the liberalized market, new enterprises developed quickly. As Pickup and White analysed for the city of Yekaterinburg, it was very difficult for women to find entry to these male-dominated entrepreneurial networks (Pickup & White 2003). Women therefore had to remain in public sector jobs, where wages had decreased. Nevertheless, especially in big cities, a small group of very successful female entrepreneurs and managers developed and is still growing (Pickup & White 2003). In

everyday language, these professionals are often referred to as ›business ladies‹ or ›business women‹.[10]

The dissolution of the restrictive Soviet system, which controlled almost every aspect of life, was embraced by researchers as the liberation of women. For example, Pilkington wrote in 1992, that »Glasnost, therefore, is giving women space for the first time to explore their own identity« (Pilkington 1992: 231). It was assumed that the young generation would grow up in a more liberal society, with greater chances to develop their own sense of self (Pilkington 1992: 231).

In a period of transition, Russia adopted a new political, economic and social system and opened itself to processes of globalisation and internationalisation. Following the generational approach, these are preconditions for fostering the development of a new generation that can be differentiated from older generations by distinctive life opportunities, life risks and life practices. Certainly, the state is no longer strictly controlling and guiding individual lives. After the dissolution of the Soviet system, opportunities have opened up in the areas of education and professions, sexuality and illegitimate partnerships, individualised life styles and internal and international mobility.

As the Russian economy stabilized and grew, already in the early 2000s Russia had reached the level of a ›medium-developed nation‹ according to the *Human Development Index* and exhibited a disproportionally high level of education (World Bank 2003). Today, Russia has reached the level of a ›highly developed‹ country (Human Development Report 2011).

A significant middle class has emerged in Russia (Ulrich & Nufferova 2007). This segment of the population usually lives in big cities and has a lifestyle similar to Western European middle classes. It is estimated to

10 In my fieldwork in 2006 and 2009 in St.Petersburg I often came across the image of the Russian ›business lady‹ successfully balancing her family and her career. This image is presented by young women with irony on the one hand, but on the other hand might also represent actual desires and life planning ideals.

include approximately 35 percent of the Russian population and is still growing, especially in the bottom income groups (Ulrich & Nufferova 2007; Shlapentokh 2003). Nevertheless, there are remarkable disparities between the very rich and the very poor within one region or city in Russia and there are gaps between the different regions of the vast country. For today's youth, opportunities are very much dependent upon specific living conditions in their regions of origin (Agranovich et al. 2006). In comparison to Soviet times, social security and state subsidies have diminished drastically, so that not only life opportunities, but also life risks have been individualized. This threatens in particular young people in the less developed regions, those without higher education, and single parents.

Given the career ambitions of young Russians on the one hand, and regional disparities of educational and occupational opportunities on the other hand, it is not surprising that Russian youngsters, especially females, show a high willingness to migrate within their home country (Florinskaya & Roshchina 2008). In contrast to internal mobility, international immigration is a very controversial option in the life planning of young Russians. According to a study of Pilkington and Omelchenko published in 2002, 55.2 percent of young Russians would emigrate temporarily to another country for the purpose of training, education or work. Only 10.2 percent are willing to leave their home country permanently (Pilkington & Omelchenko 2002). Emigration is often connected with a feeling of guilt for leaving one's country and people behind (Pilkington & Omelchenko 2002: 213).

Employment opportunities in the Russian employment market differ greatly along categories of gender and age. From Soviet times on, women have always been at a disadvantage on the employment market. This also holds true for young women who are still concentrated in typical ›female‹ jobs in the fields of health care, education and services, and seldom attain top management positions.

Among young Russians, the likeliness of unemployment decreases with the level of education. However, many highly qualified young Russians work in positions for which they are overqualified. This is due to the fact

that their lack of work experience and the general lack of a demand for qualified workers in certain employment sectors puts them at a disadvantage to older and more experienced workers. Young Russians can only use their mobility and flexibility to outplay older cohorts on the employment market (Dafflon 2009).

Experiencing the economic crisis during the 1980s and 1990s has led Russia's young generation to appreciate material wellbeing and to perceive education as the most important means of positioning oneself successfully on the employment market (Aihara & Ueda 2009). While education is booming in Russia (Florinskaya & Roschchina 2008), trainings or academic courses outside Russia are especially prestigious (Ulrich & Nufferova 2007). Alongside education and profession, the value placed on family and friends has been consistently high in Soviet and post-Soviet times (Aihara & Ueda 2009). This expresses itself in a feeling of responsibility for parents and grandparents as well as in young peoples' attitudes towards starting their own families.

The young generation of Russian females not only has greater liberties than their mothers did, it seems that young women often have an explicit sense of agency and clear plans for achieving individual goals as regards education, profession and family in continuing conditions of ongoing social change. However this may only be true for one segment of the young generation whose members have access to the financial and emotional support they need to plan and develop their lives.

Generationality and inter-generationality in individual au-pair projects

A review of the literature can only give a broad insight in the lives of young Russians; specific migration processes need to be investigated on the basis of empirical data.

Below, three case studies[11] are presented, selected from my data because all of them contain narrations about childhood during times of transition, which may indicate the emergence of a post-socialist generation. Furthermore, all of the three case studies provide insight into specific parent-daughter relationships, thus revealing aspects of inter-generationality in au-pair migration processes.

Viktoria - returning to Russia against her parents' advice

During my field work in Russia I met Viktoria, a 25 year old English-Russian interpreter living in Moscow, who used to work as an au-pair in Germany and afterwards returned to Russia. Viktoria was born in 1984 and raised in a small town (ca. 250.000 inhabitants) near Moscow as the only child of her parents. Her mother works in the municipal administration and her father is a fisherman working temporarily in Finland. Although the family suffered from financial hardships during the transition years due to the father's unemployment, today their lifestyle can be described as typical for a middle class family; they own residential property and go abroad on holidays.

Viktoria lived in her parents' house until she graduated from university at the age of 21. She then decided to spend one year in Germany as an au-pair in order to improve her German. Viktoria explains that she studied linguistics and cross cultural communication at a very prestigious university in her home town. She says »here in Russia I was a student with a high education, and my education was not so bad, because it was quite prestigious to finish the faculty that I finished«.

After her time as an au-pair, Viktoria returned to Russia in order to live together with her boyfriend. This was against the will of her parents. She believes that her parents wished her to stay in Germany because they

11 Please, be aware that only in the case of Viktoria the interview was conducted in English. The other two interview excerpts quoted have been translated from German into English. Also, in favour of readability, transcripts quoted in this article have been cleared of many transcription codes.

assumed that Germany would offer her a better life than Russia. She narrates: »They wanted me to stay there, because you know everyone thinks that here in Russia everything is bad. And there, abroad, everything is good. So it's like prejudice.« This argument also appeared in other sections of the interview, hinting at a generation-specific perception of life in Russia and ›abroad‹.

In a narration about her mother Viktoria refers to her childhood during the time of Russia's transition, which she terms »the nineties«. Although Viktoria has a close and affectionate relationship to her father, her mother is portrayed as her guide through childhood and youth. The portrayal of mothers as ›strong‹ can be found in almost all of my interviews, but it is Viktoria's case in which the mother is portrayed in most detail.

> *Interviewer:* Can you tell me more about your mum, when you say she's a *strong* person?
>
> *Viktoria:* Ah yeah, she is I don't know – I think – the way I am is (.) thanks to her, because she is very optimistic and she is – I don't know how to say – she is just strong. […] and she is ehm I think she managed to make me want things. I mean to make me – ja, I try to explain you, when I was twelve, that was the time when eh – I think it was '90, or '91 – the year, and when not everyone went abroad, and when abroad was something you did not know, because I was the first one who went abroad from my family. And there was a trip to Finland – for one week. And my mum managed to do that for me, so with the last money and everything and when I came from there, I understood that I want to study, I want to be there, I actually wanted to live abroad as there they had bright toys and everything was bright, and here, you know like.

Viktoria constructs her personal and educational development as something she owes to her mother. She describes her mother as a »strong person« whereby she defines this strength as a profound optimism. Her mother was optimistic that finding opportunities and using them in the right way would lead to a better life for Viktoria.

Viktoria's first encounter with ›abroad‹ at the age of twelve was organized by her mother, who herself had never been abroad at that time and who invested great effort in making the trip happen. For Viktoria, Finland was bright and rich in things she wanted to possess, representing the ›better life‹. The only way to achieve such a life was perceived to be through education, as Viktoria was reminded by her mother.

> *Viktoria*: […] and then she told me that you have to study, but you have to understand that I cannot give you some things. So you have to do everything yourself, because, for example if you want to get to university, you have to be either clever or you have to pay. And she said, you – I cannot pay for you, so you have to – and so she managed to make me understand, that I have to do everything myself, and that I have to study.

With regard to the specifics[12] of the Russian educational system and the family's scarce financial resources, Viktoria's mother told her that the only way for her to succeed in school and university was to be ›clever‹. She explained to her daughter that she did not have enough money to pay for her education and that Viktoria could only attend university by being a very good student.

This section also hints at Viktoria's resource of cleverness. In contrast to what might be expected, Viktoria does not portray herself as a naturally very intelligent student. Rather she states that only because she tried so hard to improve her marks was she able to stay in school. Viktoria's cleverness was achieved by hard work. Although the Russian school system was corrupted by wealthy families, Viktoria managed to secure her position in this system by being resilient, believing in herself and working hard, as she argues. These resources helped her in later life to endure the au-pair phase and to find her job as an interpreter, although at first she was not even fluent in English.

12 According to my fieldwork informants, ›good schools‹ in Russia during times of transition accepted either pupils of rich parents who could sponsor school facilities or high-achieving pupils. Those who fell in neither of these categories had to leave the school.

Viktoria goes on to describe the microcosm of her school, where she perceived two groups of pupils: the rich and the clever. When her father became unemployed and her mother could not buy new clothes for Viktoria, she became the victim of bullying. In an interesting narration, Viktoria describes an incident of bullying and how her mother helped her to cope with it.

> *Viktoria:* I remember that once the girl came to me […] and I thought she wanted to make friends with me, or something like that, and she said, may I ask you a question? I said [imitating a child's voice] ja, ja, ja, I am quite naïve, [imitating arrogant voice] why you always wear the same clothes? I remember how I felt. And I just came to my mum and said, she said that. and ehm (.) I did not demand, I didn't make a scandal that you have to give me proper clothes, or something. She said, oh come on, don't worry, believe me when you're grown-up you will have lots and lots of clothes, anything you want, and actually that's it.

In the excerpt above it becomes clear that not all families were affected equally by financial hardships. Viktoria was an outsider in school due to her family's low income and she was stigmatized by wearing the same clothes every day.

In Viktoria's family, her mother became the main provider. She was the one who reigned over the household budget and provided clothes or private lessons to Viktoria. Viktoria also turned to her mother for emotional comfort. This is best seen in Viktoria's narration of the incident of a rich girl bullying her. Her mother said to her that she has to endure this humiliation and must trust that in the future the situation will change for her. Here, the element of optimism in the perception and interpretation of life returns. It seems that Viktoria adopted her mother's belief that her future would be better and so developed the resource of resilience.

In Viktoria's biography, life in transitional times is described as difficult and painful, but also as an important experience for later life through which she learnt how to meet personal challenges and make use of opportunities. In Viktoria's pre-migration life, her mother had a very dom-

inant role and strongly influenced her daughter's interpretations of, actions in and perception of life in Russia. Life planning in this case has a strong inter-generational element until Viktoria travelled to Germany and entered another space of experience. She decided to return to Russia in order to live with her boyfriend against the will of her parents, which caused an enormous dispute between her and her mother. For months they communicated only when necessary until Viktoria started her own life in Moscow. The fight with her family was extremely painful to Viktoria, but it also helped her to gain independence in her life planning, as she herself reflects. Today, Viktoria has reconciled with her parents and assesses that it was wrong to »sacrifice my parents for a man«. She claims that she never again wants to act against the will of her parents, although today she seems to plan her life rather independently.

Experiencing ›abroad‹ as an environment which her parents have not experienced seems to have helped Viktoria to create her own perceptions and interpretations of her life.

Elena – autonomy from parents via migration

By the time I met Elena she was 25 years old, living and working in Germany. Elena came to Germany about seven years ago as an au-pair worker and stayed on. She was born in 1983 in North Caucasus and has one brother five years her senior. Her parents are entrepreneurs. At the age of 17, Elena left her home and moved 300 kilometres away to attend one of Russia's prestigious universities. She was unhappy with this situation as she felt bored by her studies in economics and felt lonely without her family. Making things worse, she was stalked by a man she calls »Mafioso« and was unable to find a way to fight off his approaches. In particular after the Mafioso and his friends followed Elena by car and joked about abducting her, she did not feel safe any longer.

Elena contacted her mother's best friend Ludmilla, who lives in Germany and whom Elena had visited before, to ask her to help Elena come to Germany and take a ›holiday year‹ from her studies. Ludmilla organized an au-pair family for Elena.

Elena's parents did not mind her taking this step. They supported their daughter financially in Germany. They sent her money each month, because they considered the au-pair wage to be much too low. During her time as an au-pair, Elena fell in love with a German of Russian origin. Supported by Ludmilla, she decided to prolong her stay in Germany. She first attended a language class and then enrolled in university. This education was financed by her parents, who do not seem to have tried to influence Elena's decision to stay in Germany or return to Russia. After she graduated from university with the highest marks possible, Elena began to work as a research fellow and has started her doctoral thesis.

Elena has settled in Germany and argues that she will not return to Russia permanently, stating »this is not mine anymore […] it does not fit me any longer«. For her future, Elena makes very clear that she plans to work in the field of German-Russian relations so that she can live in Germany, but travel to Russia regularly. Apart from this, she dreams about her parents and her brother moving to Germany, so that one day they will live together again.

Elena does not name Russia's transition in particular as an important experience in her life. This might be connected to the socio-economic status of her family. In comparison to all other (former) au-pair workers I interviewed, Elena seems to stem from a very wealthy family. I conclude this from Elena's narrations about her family's lifestyle (large residential property, holiday trips, domestic workers in the house, prestigious university, etc.). Moreover, in other segments of the interview, Elena tells that her childhood friends have now started careers in high positions within Moscow's administration for example, which she explains is very difficult to access. Therefore, it can be assumed that Elena's family belongs to an elite circle.

Although Elena does not mention Russia's transition in her interview, she does narrate an important experience of her childhood, which she interprets as the source of her ability to cope with difficult situations in later life. In particular, Elena pinpoints her resource of self-sufficiency.[13]

> *Interviewer:* And eh you mentioned, that you have always been quite self-sufficient and that this helped you to solve some problems. Can you tell me more, what this means (.) self-sufficiency?
>
> *Elena:* Yes well I think, that means (.) that my parents for example ehm their whole life long they were working and working and working mhm that's why they have earned money, but they also quite neglected us, […] I don't really mean neglected, we were not left alone in a messy house or anything like that. Of course we always had enough food and clothes, but this, that mum and dad hang out with us and correct homework and all the time teach us something, it was not like this in my family.

Her narration does not directly refer to living conditions and circumstances in Russia. Rather it is dominated by intra-family relations. Elena explains that both her parents have always been working. It seems that her parents were already employed in highly-qualified and particularly well-paid positions during Soviet times and that they managed to retain (and probably improve) their socio-economic position through times of transition.

Elena's childhood clearly was spent in material wellbeing, but she and her brother were left alone during the day to prepare their meals, do their homework and occupy themselves in their spare time. Especially when Elena says that her parents did not spend much time with her, the lack of immaterial, emotional care is obvious.

> *Elena:* For example our mother – of course she said and asked and like this, but it was never like for other kids, like [imitating voice] my son, did you eat? Little daughter you look so thin! [laughing]

13 In German she uses the word *selbständig*.

> You know what I mean? Like (.) [imitating voice] oh my god, you are getting too skinny. Eat some decent food! Like this.

Elena, by imitating the voice of a stereotypical mother who cares about her children's eating habits, marks an ideal of family life which was not fulfilled in her own family. Furthermore, Elena narrates that her parents' conflicts with each other distracted them from caring for their children. Only in cases of acute problems at school did Elena's parents pay attention to their children.

In other parts of the interview, the relationship between Elena and her parents is portrayed similarly. Her parents only interfered in Elena's life when they assumed that something was going wrong. For example, when Elena informed them she would travel to Germany, her mother called her and asked sorrowfully whether there was a problem at her university. It is very important that Elena did not tell her mother she was being stalked by a man and was unhappy with her studies, but instead claimed that she just wanted to spend some time abroad.

In another section of the interview, Elena explains that she made the decision to study herself, following the example of her older brother, and then adds that she has always developed and realized her life goals and wishes by herself. The parents in this biography only support their children financially and seem to be barely involved in their children's actual life planning.

> *Elena:* Then my brother studied and […] then we – and then I said, now I want to study as well! And then I started to study and this was so far away from home. I was seventeen at the time and then I said, now I want to learn tennis and then I organized this by myself, always organized everything by myself, also Germany and the like, everything organized by myself. Our parents did not have to take care of everything so that we achieve something as I can now see it's like for other kids who get everything handed to them on a silver platter, all the things, just so they can stand on their own two legs. And ehm that's not how it was in our home, but this made us stronger and stronger and more immune, so to speak,

> against all sorts of shit. And now I don't see it as a disadvantage. Clearly. And now they have to – well they know, what is going on here [in Germany, CR], but they don't have to give advice all the time.

This excerpt ends with Elena's conclusion that the quasi-absence of her parents taught her how to take care of herself. She stresses that she herself decided to enrol in university and to start playing tennis (which was very important to her during her studies at the Russian university) as well as to travel to Germany. Elena says that »our parents did not have to take care of everything so that we achieve something«, comparing her own case to children from other families.

In accordance with other sections, Elena presents the achievements of her life as rooted in her own abilities and resources, which she already learned to utilise during childhood. What is more, by saying »this made us stronger and stronger and more immune, so to speak, against all sorts of shit« she marks her childhood experiences as having helped her to endure emotional hardships. The interpretation can be made that Elena has developed coping strategies for emotionally stressful situations which helped her to cope with emotionally challenging troubles especially in her au-pair family and following life phases.

Olga – migration as a mother-daughter-project

By the time of the interview, Olga was 26 years old and had studied psychology at a German university, having settled in Germany after the au-pair phase. Olga was born in 1984 in a town of one million inhabitants in the Southern Ural region. She is the only child of her mother, a teacher. Her Georgian father left the family right after Olga's birth. Olga lived together with her mother, her aunt and her grandmother during her childhood and youth. She attended a medical college and first worked as a nurse. Later she started to study psychology. In the third year of her studies, Olga decided to take a holiday year and travelled to Germany to work as an au-pair. She was supported in this by her other aunt who lives in Germany.

Olga's mother is the most important person in her life and vice versa. Olga has always discussed her life planning with her mother, even after she moved to Germany. When Olga makes plans for her own life, she always incorporates her mother. She is very clear that in the future she will live in close proximity to her mother, either bringing her to Germany or moving with her to a more attractive Russian city such as St. Petersburg or Moscow.

Olga's case reveals a specific mother-daughter relationship in which both women are the only important person for the other, although they have already lived separately for five years now. Asked, how her mother reacted when Olga got accepted for the au-pair programme, Olga presents following argumentation:

> *Olga*: There was happiness and sorrow at the same time, because she was happy that I will perhaps have better chances and (.) ehm that my life somehow will work out differently. That my life will be different than hers maybe. But she was also sad that I was going to leave.

Migration in Olga's biography is constructed ambiguously. It is implied that in her hometown she would not have good opportunities and that her life might follow the same trajectory as that of her mother. But, to migrate also means to leave her mother behind.

Asked about this topos of ›better opportunities‹, Olga finally refers to her mother's biographical experiences during transition times.

> *Interviewer:* What do you mean, that your life – mhm that you would have better opportunities and that your life would develop differently?
>
> *Olga:* Ehm well, we can see it like this – she studied, she is ehm (.) a teacher, actually not really a teacher, she studied chemistry and ehm in the same university where I studied later. And ehm then she worked in a factory for a couple of years (.) and later when she was already married and when she had a child – me so to speak and ehm (.) then she started to work as a teacher (.) and then when all this crisis and circumstances came to Russia, that was in the

> 1990s that was a horrible time und after she – (.) until that time she had earned enough and we were often on holidays when I was small and ehm in that time – I still can remember that time, she could not even buy ice-cream, and we had no money at all and that went on for a couple of years and since then eh (.) teachers in general, it is the absolutely worst paid job and eh I believe anyway that in my hometown there is nothing – there are no chances or opportunities to achieve something.

The fall of the Soviet Union in this narration is presented as the reason why the biography of Olga's mother took a negative turn. Olga links her life to that of her mother recounting that both studied at the same university. Olga concludes that in the Soviet Union, chances for highly-qualified single women were much better, but that during transition there was a drastic devaluation of jobs in the public sector.

In other parts of this interview it becomes even more obvious that for Olga her hometown is a place without any appealing perspectives, she even calls it a ›hole‹, and that she does not believe that this is going to change in the future. Olga contrasts her hometown to Russian metropolises, where chances are very different and where being a psychologist might help her to find a well-paying and satisfying job.

Olga then explains that for her it was easier to come to Germany than to move to a Russian metropolis (because of her family relations), although to this day she considers Russia her home. She says »with my mind I do understand that it is not getting any better there [Russia, CR] and it is not getting any easier, but all the same with my heart I just want to go home«. From the excerpt above the interpretation can be made that the core of this mother-daughter relationship is the understanding that the daughter's life shall by no means replicate the mother's in its negative aspects.

In spite of her homesickness, Olga considers settling in Germany and starting a career there instead of returning to a Russian metropolis as she had first planned. By now she has already lived in Germany for five years. She argues that she does not know how to live an ›adult life‹ in

Russia, how to deal with local administrative offices or even how to apply for a job. Moreover, she assumes that her German qualifications and her German language skills will not be appreciated on the Russian employment market as Olga and her mother had originally believed.

Olga has recently found out that in a couple of years she might qualify for German citizenship and thereby be granted the right to bring her mother to Germany. Since Olga still does not identify with Germany as her home, she feels very sad and unwilling to give up her Russian citizenship as an important part of her Russian identity. Nevertheless, she forces herself to consider the benefits of changing her citizenship, a step also strongly encouraged by her mother.

> *Interviewer:* And do you know – ehm and do you talk to your mother about your future, whether you should stay in Germany or return to Russia?
>
> *Olga:* Yes ehm (.) I have already told her that [that she might stay in Germany after she has graduated, CR] and I actually did not expect her to react like that. I thought she will be scared if I will stay here and not return to Russia and I was astonished a little bit, that she reacted so cool and she said that of course I have to do anything and look for anything of how to – which opportunities there are and if I can get citizenship of course I must take it. I was astonished about that.

The section above may be interpreted as an expression of Olga's disappointment that her mother did not ask her to return to Russia. This makes her aim to return to Russia in order to live together with her mother obsolete. Olga frames her mother's attitude as rooted in her mother's perception of opportunities in Germany. In this regard, her mother sacrifices her own desire for Olga's return in favour of Olga's assumed better life in Germany.

Thus the common mission of mother and daughter has shifted from organizing Olga an education in Germany in order to be competitive on the Russian employment market to Olga's settlement in Germany. Nevertheless, Olga is still convinced that in the future she will live together

with her mother and that if she stays in Germany her mother has to follow her. Olga talks about offering her mother a better life, thus erasing the hardships she bore in Russia. In this regard, Olga's better life is the reward for her mother's hardships. Olga wants to repay her mother's efforts by also offering this better life to her, although at present both suffer enormously from living apart.

Comparison of cases: Generational versus individual experiences?

Comparing the three cases presented above reveals that the young women refer to their childhood when explaining how they developed attitudes and resources important to their biography and their current life. It is not surprising that these narrations about childhood involve stories about parents. However, the specific ways in which their parents have dealt with Russia's transition and the attitudes which they presented to their children regarding the changing living conditions in Russia have strongly impacted the young women's perception of their own lives.

Whereas Viktoria's and Olga's families suffered from poverty, and their living standards decreased so much that both daughters remember the deprivations of this time, Elena's family represents a different socio-economic group that secured their wealth during Russia's transition.

Viktoria and Olga both interpret the hardships of their childhood as being caused by »the '90s«, a common experience probably also shared by many young Russians who grew up during the transition. Whether or not these cases form one generation in Mannheim's sense cannot be ascertained without a more elaborate analysis. Elena's case does not fit into this classification. Due to her socio-economic background, Elena spent her childhood in material wellbeing and never experienced poverty. Nevertheless, she suffered from a lack of emotional care and ascribes this experience to inner familiar causes: In her biography, Elena does not argue that her parents had to work hard because of the economic crises but that they were working hard of their own free will.

In Viktoria's and Olga's biographies, the topos of a ›better life‹ is striking. Guaranteeing their daughters a better life is presented as the overall aim of their mothers' efforts. I assume that this notion firstly implies material wellbeing, but also self-fulfilment and satisfaction with work. A crucial element is the mothers' optimism that a better life for their daughters depends on the detection of certain chances and opportunities (a good school or university, a trip abroad, au-pair, etc.) and their successful utilization.

The rupture between the two different social generations of women is certainly caused by the actual liberalization of life patterns after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, making international mobility possible. However, in these biographies it also becomes clear that the mothers actively directed their daughters to make use of these opportunities. Generational change for a better life seems in this regard to be an inter-generational project within the family units.

Having realised how hard their mothers worked and how much they sacrificed for their daughters, Viktoria and Olga have felt obliged from childhood on to fulfil their mothers' ideals of this better life, hereby rewarding their mothers for their efforts. In Olga's case, this effort is presented as the mother's pain about the daughter's absence, while Viktoria stresses her mother's hard work to provide for her.

Similar research findings about young Russians suggest that, as in the families of my interviewees (all of the mothers graduated from university), education is considered the key to social upward mobility.[14] These mothers value going abroad as another stepping stone in improving life opportunities. Au-pair migration in these two cases can clearly be interpreted as an inter-generational project of both mother and daughter for a ›better life‹. Nevertheless, Olga's and Viktoria's cases also show that their

14 Other means to achieving a better life, such as marriage to a rich husband or a career as a fashion model, a television presenter or musician were never even mentioned in any of my interviews. Apparently, all of my interviewees stem from social milieus in which education is the major means to social upward mobility for females.

mothers' expectations and hopes must always be negotiated with the daughters' own life plans and preferences, sometimes leading to interpersonal disputes. Following the generational approach, it may be argued that the mothers' generation has specific interpretations of their daughters' lives abroad which do not match the interpretations of their daughters' generation, who have experienced life outside Russia for themselves.

In contrast to Olga and Viktoria, Elena is not raised with the aim of once living a better life. In Elena's case, au-pair migration can only be considered an inter-generational project with regard to her parents' financial support, since they do not encourage her to go abroad. What is more, au-pair migration was organized solely by Elena and her parents did not express any expectations in this regard. For Elena, au-pair mobility is not connected with improving her opportunities, but was initiated as a refuge from the university milieu in which she was placed in Russia.

Although their childhoods were very different, Viktoria's and Elena's cases show some similar aspects. Both experienced their families as deviant from others. Viktoria's family had much smaller financial resources than the families of her schoolmates. Stigmatized by her clothes, Viktoria experienced bullying at school. Elena on the other hand recognized that other parents were more actively involved in raising their children. We can assume that her feelings of being neglected by her parents caused sorrow and distress.

Reflecting on their childhoods, Elena and Viktoria resemble each other in that they interpret their painful experiences as a source of strength for coping with difficult situations in later life. Whereas Viktoria, through her mother's encouragement, has learnt to endure humiliation and grew to become a person with remarkable resources of resilience, self-confidence and diligence, Elena learnt how to plan and organize her life self-sufficiently and how to cope with emotionally stressful situations.

From this case comparison we can conclude that hardships experienced during childhood were managed by the young women and their families in a specific way, developing resources and the motivation necessary for achieving social upward mobility in later life. Depending on the individual case, parents – with their generation-specific interpretations of life – may take a stronger or lesser influence on the lives of their children. Experiences of Russia's transition in some cases caused the understanding that (temporary) emigration from Russia is the best option for the young generation, even though it involves the spatial separation of the family. In spite of the strong unity of some families, a generational rupture may be caused when children make their own experiences and develop their own interpretations of life outside Russia, thus challenging their parents' interpretative authority about a ›better life‹.

Concluding remarks

Biographies of young Russian women who have worked as au-pairs in Germany may be approached using the concept of biography and the concept of generation. The empirical analysis of this article shows that the generational approach is powerful in investigating how different biographical explanations and interpretations of life and life planning are rooted in collective experiences within a specific socio-historic context. Following Mannheim's approach, two different generations can be distinguished in au-pair migration: First, the generation of the migrants themselves, who were born around the 1980s and experienced Russia's transition during their childhood and youth. Second, the generation of their parents, who lived during the era of the Soviet Union with its specific opportunities for and limits on life trajectories, also plays a role in the phenomenon of au-pair migration.

Intersecting the succession of social generations who lived through different historical phases within Russia are familial generations of grandparents, parents and children who form family units. As exemplified by the empirical cases at hand, some of these families coped with the hardships of Russia's crisis by creating an ideal of a better life which their children will once be able to live. Typically, families in this milieu believe

education and emigration to be major opportunities for the desired social upward mobility. Generational change to a different life thereby becomes an inter-generational project of parents and children, even if it necessitates the spatial separation of the family as a result of migration. Inter-generationality in this regard seems to be dominated by the interpretative authority of the parents' generation concerning the appropriate utilization of life opportunities. Nevertheless, in the course of maturing, members of the young generation live their own lives and in these lives migration is a reality their parents have not lived through themselves. Thus children develop their own generation-specific orientations and their own life goals, which can conflict with their parents' ideals and cause ruptures in the inter-generational life project.

The empirical analysis within this paper shows that the scientific benefit of the generational approach lies in its potential to trace biographical explanations to collective experiences of the interviewees, as can be seen in more than one case. It also reveals the linkage between individual lives – whether those of members of the same social generation or members of different familial generations. Nevertheless, it also becomes clear that this approach does not fully grasp the individual layering of experiences. Only the biographical approach, with its focus on the individual life, is able to reveal the way in which other categories of social differentiation such as class, gender, ethnicity, etc. intersect with generation, as well as how these categories relate to very individual life experiences. Cases which do not seem to share the characteristic attributes of their generation can perhaps be better understood by applying the micro-level analysis of the biographical approach. The generational approach does not itself provide methodological tools and is therefore compatible with different methodological strategies. For this reason it appears to be most enriching to integrate the generational approach into biographical research.

Even though the empirical cases at hand reveal biographical constructions which researchers of post-socialism assume to be typical for this generation, it is questionable whether the target group of this article in fact represents the entire post-socialist generation, or only forms one

specific subgroup within the larger generation. This subgroup may be characterized by its distinctive way of transforming experiences of Russia's past and present into aspirations for travelling, working and studying abroad, not to mention its access to the personal resources needed to realise their objectives. Although their biographical acting, with its focus on education and migration, appears similar, au-pair workers do not form a generational cohesion by acting collectively, instead they act simultaneously. Au-pair workers seldom plan and organize their migration processes in collaboration with other generational members. For most of them, family and sometimes partners are the important others involved in their life planning.

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